

Introduction to Discovering our Faith Through Story and Play

The stories included here in *Discovering Our Faith Through Story and Play* are the stories that helped me learn how to be a Friend (a process that is never quite complete). Each story illustrates a theme or core concept in Quakerism. By storytelling with all ages present, we are extending the oral tradition which, in turn, reveals and defines our community values and history. Storytelling teaches children while reminding adults. Fortunately, stories are also entertaining for all.

Originally, I collected these stories for sale with play figures. All references to little people or play figures remain in this informal *Discovering Our Faith* curriculum. These play figures may be ordered from Mary Snyder at: dutchhaven38@gmail.com

Because Quakerism is a biblically based religion, several Bible stories are also included in this packet. These biblical lessons are based on Sofia Cavalletti's application of Montessori methods to religious education for children who came to the Vatican in Rome. American theologian, Jerome Berryman, studied with Cavalletti and built on what she started. Here, the Shepherd and Sheep presentation is most like Cavalletti's approach with each sheep taking the name of a child. The Christmas story plans use a similar class structure. However, entering the story by telling our family birth stories is my own contribution.

Friends are also becoming involved in this style of foundational story presentation. For a more careful and much deeper approach to Quaker religious education using concrete materials, try to attend a workshop. See www.fgcquaker.org/faithandplay for more information.

Observing what children do and say with a story offers the opportunity for discernment of where children are in their interests and development. "Play is a child's work," said Piaget, and through this "work" we adults may share our faith with children.

What makes this approach to religious education so much fun is helping and encouraging older children and teens to share where they are in their journey through play and drama and art. Remember, it is the act of making a play or working with a favorite art media that makes a story one's own. Displaying art work; doing a puppet show or performing a play for the entire meeting creates connections.

Continuing the oral tradition, now with play figures and other tactile aids, and responding to the story through art and drama extend a wonderful invitation to discover the faith that is within each of us. Enjoy!

For more information visit my website:
<http://discoveringourfaith.com>

Mary Snyder
46084 238th Street
Wentworth, SD 57075
dutchhavenf38@gmail.com

QUAKERS I

Storytelling, Art, and Play for People Ages Three to Adult

These first stories bring to life the inner discoveries of several well-known Friends.

If everyone in your group is younger than eight, simplify Lesson 1 by paraphrasing the quote from *London Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice* before you attempt to do this lesson. Or, ask for help from the older children in finding the meaning. Know that you are introducing ways to live our Quaker testimonies without placing emphasis on exactly what a testimony is. It is more important to learn to live the testimonies than to talk about and define them.

Set up and introduce story circle and work areas in advance of this lesson, taking care to keep everything (shelves, tables, work stations, etc.) on the physical level of the children. For more information regarding set up, see Jerome Berryman's *Teaching Godly Play: A Sunday Morning Handbook*.

To prepare subsequent lesson plans, think about your listeners and prepare to read or tell each story in a way that will speak to them. Although it sounds contradictory, the goal is to communicate the heart of the story while patiently waiting for the listeners to sort out what each is ready to hear. See the table of contents for what I consider to be the heart of each story.

Although all you need is a story and free-choice art and/or block centers for a good preschool-elementary program, lists of open-ended, often wondering questions follow each story. And for those of you who want them, specific activities follow each story. Be discerning. Choose what is best for your group at this time.

Before introducing play figures to children, decide where you want the figures to be stored for the next person. This may be on a shelf next to blocks or in bags hung on child-height, round (non-eye poking) knobs for easy access. If you do not have a room, consider bringing play figures and art supplies in a special box or large bag each First Day.

Deeper understanding will occur for everyone involved with repetition of each story for two to four weeks. Change the accompanying activity or offer various accompanying activities as choices each time.

Lesson Plan 1: An Introduction to Quaker Play Figures and The Testimony of Simplicity

1. Introduce play figures to children. Take out one figure. Handle the figure with awe and care. Wonder with the children who this might be. Wonder if the children have ever seen anyone wearing such a hat? Dressed in such a color? Take out another figure and continue wondering. "I wonder if you have ever seen anyone wearing a bonnet like this? I wonder why this person is dressed in gray and this other one is dressed in clothes that

seem to have no color at all?" Carefully give each child a figure to hold as the group thinks about these questions. Don't worry if there are no answers.

2. Read and comment on the Quaker Testimony of Simplicity. First say something like, "In 1691, a long, long time ago in England, the yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends issued an advice. I wonder what an advice is... I wonder how an advice is different from an order..."

Read the following advice. Ask if they can find any clues regarding the play people in this advice:

It is our tender and Christian advice that Friends take care to keep to truth and plainness, in language, habit, deportment and behavior; that the simplicity of truth in these things may not wear out nor be lost in our days, nor in our posterity's; and to avoid pride and immodesty in apparel, and all vain and superfluous fashions of the world.¹

First, take some time for older children to translate this language into words that are easier for younger ones to understand. After you have talked about what “fashions of the world” might mean, perhaps look at some encyclopedia pictures of what royalty in England wore at the end of the 17th century.

3. Continue to wonder together. “Do you think these people that you are holding were kings and queens? I wonder who they might be...” Children may or may NOT guess that their new play people are supposed to be Quakers in plain dress. If children are not ready to make the connection, do NOT do it for them. Let the concept of plain dress unravel in future play times.

After some speculation about the historical, perhaps talk with children about how they choose their clothing. To initiate this conversation, you may want to choose questions from the following that are appropriate for your group or make up your own:

“Do you want clothing that is practical? I wonder if you care whether it can be easily washed, or dry cleaned... I wonder what kind of clothing you feel comfortable wearing... I wonder if you care what others at school think of your clothing? Do you care about where your clothing is made and who makes it? What do you do with your clothes when you have grown too big to wear them?”

4. Ask children to put the play figures away so that the figures are ready for the next person who wishes to use them. This may be

on a labeled shelf or in a marked container. Always handle the play figures as if you think they are something special.

5. Choice time or time for a response to the Testimony of Simplicity through art.

Response choices may be play in the block area with the figures that have now been introduced—or open ended art.

To introduce art, invite children to work out parts of the story that are important to them. Perhaps say something like this: “Think about some work that you would like to do with this story. Here are paper, glue, some fabric pieces, and markers. What part of the story would you like to work on? How would you like to do your work?” As each individual tells you his/her idea, ask that child to move to the art table and to start work.

In the beginning, children will need encouragement to integrate media and to get started with the materials that you have introduced. Some additional project ideas may include, but are not limited to:

a. Changing play people from Quakers to royalty by adding capes and crowns.

b. Asking children to lie down on a large piece of paper. After outlining the body of each child, adhere that child's old clothes to the drawings.

6. Clean up. Lead the group in replacing figures, blocks, and art materials so that all is ready for the next person. Clean up is often taught as part of our community covenant and a part of our Testimony of Community.

7. Closing. End your class time with a closing song or prayer.

Next time. Take more time to repeat the advice. Use questions that you did not use this first time or simply ask what new ideas anyone has had this past week.

¹London Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice

Lesson Plan 2: George Fox

1. Wonder together. “I wonder if anyone remembers anything about these little people that we talked about last time.” Listen to answers, then pick out one play figure. Perhaps say: “I think this might be George Fox. Will you hold George Fox while I tell a story about George Fox?” (As teacher, your own preparation may include reading the original story in *The Journal of George Fox*.)

2. Tell or read a George Fox story. (One such story is found in an “I can read” format on pages 9 and 10 of this packet. Another version of this same story is found in Appendix III of *Opening Doors to Quaker Religious Education*.)

3. Choice time: Invite the children to work out parts of the story. In addition to free choice of art and play materials, some possibilities include:

a. Creating a setting for all or part of the story.

b. Building a church or house out of blocks, or a hollow tree out of paper maché.

c. Adding clothing to the figures: Green aprons were traditional wear for Quaker women during the time of George Fox.

d. Illustrating a storyline book. *George Fox Finds God* pages 9 and 10 is meant to be cut apart and glued down, one line per page, into a storyline book. Children illustrate the books, adding their own picture cues. Create additional storyline books from your reading in journals. Or, ask adults and teens to create other books from their own reading.

Write such books simply enough so that children can add picture cues, then read the book to their parents. This weaving of story among teachers, teens, children, and parents is a very important way of building and maintaining community in your meeting or church.

4. Clean up. Again, involve the children in putting all materials away. In the future, repeat your first story, then add another story about George Fox or introduce another early Friend.

5. Closing. Be certain to bring your class to a clear close, perhaps with another song about George Fox.

The following stories may be read or told on subsequent days. They are in no particular order. It is my understanding that students in Steiner Schools get only one new story per week and spend the rest of the week responding to it. How about one story per month in First Day School?

Elizabeth Fry and the Boot

By Murry P. Engle

The old stone inn was warm inside and welcoming to Elizabeth Fry. In spite of her heavy wool shawl and long wool skirt that almost touched the ground around her feet, Elizabeth was chilled straight through. She had just returned to the inn after having spent the day, like many days before, in the cold and drafty women’s side of the prison at Bristol.

“Those filthy stone rooms, with cold and dripping walls, are no fit place for anyone to stay, no matter what crimes those poor women have committed,” Elizabeth thought as she passed the big cheerful fire which warmed the main room of the inn. “And those poor little children clutching their mother’s skirts. Oh, how I’d like to take the youngsters out into the sunshine and let them run. But then, without their children constantly at their sides the women would fight among themselves more than ever. If I could find something to occupy their minds and hands--knitting, perhaps--.” So ran her thoughts as she climbed the winding stairs to her room.

When she opened the door to her little room in the inn, she sensed something strange about it. It was a low-ceilinged room which she had

grown to know quite well during her brief visit at Bristol. The small-paned windows were still closed as she had left them in the morning, but a dresser drawer was partly opened, and a shawl dangled from it. Her eyes glanced down to the floor and she saw the candle from the nightstand lying broken on the bare boards. Then she gave a little gasp. For there, protruding from under the bed, just visible below the gay patchwork quilt, was the sole of a man's boot.

Elizabeth Fry wondered what she should do about that man under her bed. To give herself time to think she went quietly to the dresser and closed the drawer. Then she picked up the broken candle and reached a decision. Elizabeth knelt down beside the boot. She could hear the man breathing hard under the bed, terrified at the prospect of being caught. "Dear Lord," she began, "please forgive this man for what he has done. May your goodness enter his heart and help him to improve his ways." Her voice was soft and kind.

The boot stirred.

"Dear Lord, this man is confused and needs your guidance so that he will steal no more."

The man crawled out from under the bed. He was very thin, with a dark, stubbly beard and long, unkempt hair.

"Why are you praying for me? Why don't you call the innkeeper and get it over with?" the man asked gruffly.

"The Lord is the only one I'll call on. Thee must have had a very special reason for coming into my room," said Elizabeth as she rose from her knees.

His shoulders drooped.

"Cans't thee tell me what it was?" she continued. The

man remained silent and Elizabeth waited.

"I'm hungry, ma'am," he said at last. "I've been hungry for days. I've been stealing scraps of food, but that didn't fill the empty hole here in my stomach. So I needed money--for real food. I was looking for a heavy coat, too."

"I'm glad thee came to my room," Elizabeth said brightly. "I think I can help thee."

The man looked at her in utter amazement. He had never been treated so kindly before, not even that time when he was working as a footman on the stagecoach.

Elizabeth pulled a heavy sweater from the drawer. "This is my husband's sweater--I think it will fit. Now come downstairs with me and I'll ask the innkeeper to give thee a real dinner.

The man's sad face broke into a broad grin. "You're sure good to me, ma'am, because you could have had me put in prison for breaking into your room--or will you anyhow?" His eyes suddenly darted toward the window with a wild look. "No," said Elizabeth, "I'm too well acquainted with prisons--I wouldn't ever send anyone there."

"You mean you've been in prison, ma'am?" His deep voice rose a little in astonishment.

"Many prisons," she answered with a chuckle.

"So have I, but that's nothing to laugh about," the man answered darkly. "Whatever could you have done, ma'am, to get thrown into one of those holes?"

"I'll tell thee about it while thee eats dinner," and Elizabeth led the man downstairs to the big hall in the inn.

While the man hungrily consumed a big plate of boiled mutton and potatoes, Elizabeth told him about her work in the women's prisons. Then he gave her a full account of his hard luck.

He had been in prison three times, the first time for debts, once for stealing, and the third time he had not stolen but had been sent there merely on his reputation. Since his last term in prison he had not been able to get a job. His clothes were worn and dirty, and his appearance so bad that no one trusted him enough to give him work. He was determined never to be thrown in jail again, so therefore he had almost starved to death before he came at last to Elizabeth Fry's room.

Mrs. Fry gave him some money for new clothes and soap, then discussed with him what kind of work he could do. When he left her, he thanked her very much and started from the inn with the lightest heart he had for

many years. Elizabeth Fry aroused in him the courage he needed to start afresh.

Reprinted from *Candles in the Dark*
Religious Education Committee,
Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1964

For discussion:

1. I wonder how Elizabeth Fry felt when she saw the boot...
2. I wonder why she prayed as she did...
3. How would you feel if you found someone or something (say a spider) in your bedroom?
4. What do you think you would do?
5. I wonder how Elizabeth Fry's actions affected the burglar... I wonder what he was feeling when he left the inn...

Activities

When you have little Quaker people, blocks and an art area set out, children will eventually start to work through the story on their own. In addition to open-ended art and play areas you may consider offering the following choices:

1. Building a prison or an inn from blocks.
2. Visiting your local jail after making cards or small gifts for those in jail.

The Marvelous Adventures of Mary Fisher

By Frances Margaret Fox

Before telling this story, wonder about how God sometimes asks us to do what appears to be impossible. Talk with your group, perhaps giving examples from your own life or from others in your meeting.

You feel a little like rubbing your eyes when you see the lovely Mary Fisher walking across the pages of history. She seems like someone who stepped out of a fairy tale, but her story is a true one.

Mary was a seventeenth-century Quaker woman who lived in England. As she thought about the leaders of various nations, she felt a

special concern for the Sultan of Turkey, feared because of his warlike ways. She felt that war was wrong and that God wanted her to go to the Sultan with an important message.

In the seventeenth century, the whole world feared and hated the Turks. For a young woman to set out alone for Turkey, to the war camp of the Grand Turk was indeed a daring adventure. Mary's best friends warned her, "You will be treated cruelly. If you go to Turkey, the Sultan will surely put you to death." But Mary paid no attention, certain that she was doing God's will.

In due time, Mary Fisher arrived in Smyrna. There, an English official advised her, "You must go back to England. This is not a safe place for a lovely young woman like you." And with that, he put her on a ship homeward bound, saying, "I hope that you will have a pleasant voyage and arrive safely in England." But that official didn't know Mary Fisher's mind. She went quietly on board the ship and sailed away. Then she explained her mission of peace to the captain. When she concluded by saying, "I was sent by God with a message for the Sultan of Turkey, which must be delivered," the captain was so impressed that he allowed her to leave his ship at the next port. But before she disembarked, he cautioned her, "Mary Fisher, if you travel in that direction for six hundred miles, you will find the Sultan encamped with his army at Adrianople. And I warn you that the way is rough over the mountains and through the wilderness of Greece and Macedonia. But that will be nothing compared to the dangers you will meet when you reach the Sultan's camp. I beg of you, return to your home in England."

But once again, Mary was not to be turned back. When the captain looked into her resolute face and listened to her determined voice, he knew that nothing he could say would make any difference. So he allowed her to leave his ship and continue her journey.

As she traveled, she felt that God was very near to her. At long last, she arrived in Adrianople. There, outside the city, in the wooded hills, the sixteen-year-old Sultan was encamped with his army and his entire court.

They lived in dazzling splendor. Their two thousand tents were made of gleaming silk and the Sultan's own tent was lined with embroidered gold.

After Mary was greeted by a servant, she was given time to rest following her strenuous journey. She was offered bright clothing of soft silk and sparkling jewels to wear when she appeared before the Sultan. The women of the court, who treated her kindly, volunteered to lend her their choicest treasures. But Mary replied gently, "Thank you. I don't need any adornment. Being clean and presentable is enough."

When she entered the Sultan's court, she looked neat and pretty in her simple Quaker dress and white cap. The young Sultan and the members of his court in Oriental splendor and flashing jewels, looked with astonishment at Mary.

"Have I been told the truth? Have you really come all the way from England to bring me a message from your God?" asked the Sultan.

"Yes," replied Mary.

The Sultan had three interpreters to explain Mary's message, but there she stood saying nothing, waiting in silence for God's guidance.

"Perhaps our guest is timid," reasoned the Sultan.

"Perhaps she is afraid to speak in the presence of so many strangers." Turning to Mary he inquired, "Shall I send some of my subjects out of the tent?"

"That is not necessary," replied Mary, waiting quietly.

The Sultan thought that Mary was afraid of him, knowing that her life was in his hands. And so in the most kindly fashion, he tried to put the young Quaker woman at ease. "Do not be afraid. Speak the word of God to us--the word which you have come to bring. But be sure you speak only the word you have from your God--nothing more and nothing less. We are willing to hear your message, whatever it may be. And now will you speak?"

Quietly and firmly, Mary told her hearers about the living God whose spirit dwells in the hearts of all

people; about the living God who wants everyone to live at peace with one another.

"When she paused, the Sultan spoke again. "Have you anything more to say?"

"I wish to know if my message was understood," answered Mary.

"Yes," responded the Sultan. "We understood. We respect you because you risked your life to bring us a message of peace from your God."

When Mary was ready to leave, the Sultan offered to give her an escort of his fiercest soldiers to protect her on her return journey. Thanking him for his thoughtfulness, Mary declined. "I will put my trust in God. God brought me here in safety and will guide me as I go back."

Then, knowing in whom she trusted, she left the

Sultan's camp and, after some time, reached her home in England.

From *Candles in the Dark*.

For discussion:

1. I wonder if you have ever felt that God was asking you to do something difficult... I wonder if people have ever tried to talk you out of doing something you knew to be right...

2. I wonder why Mary refused the clothes offered by the Sultan's court... I wonder what people in the court thought of Mary's personal appearance...

3. I wonder how Mary felt during the time that she was in silence... I wonder how you feel in the silence of meeting for worship... Do you ever like to be in silence, like Mary, before you talk?

4. I wonder how the Sultan felt after Mary's visit. Do you think that he stopped fighting with his neighbors? Do you ever fight with your friends and neighbors? Have you ever done anything to end such conflicts?

5. What does this story tell us about the beliefs of the Religious Society of Friends. (Older children may wish to look up the Peace Testimony in Faith and Practice.)

Activities

In addition to free-choice art and play, activities may include:

1. Building a ship out of blocks and re-enacting the shipboard part of the story.
2. Making a tent for the Sultan. This could be playcloths over a table or a real tent.
3. Making Turkish clothing for all of the figures except one, Mary Fisher.
4. Making a large map for Mary to travel across.
5. Repeatedly playing through the story.

Rufus Jones and the Fuchsia Plant

Adapted from *Finding the Trail of Life* by Mary Snyder

This story tells how that "seed of evil" was at work in a famous child. Children cheerfully connect with this story. For additional background, adults might look at Proposition 4 on Estrangement in Barclay's Apology.

Rufus Jones always wanted to be good. When he was a tiny baby, his Aunt Peace could see that Rufus would grow up to do good and wonderful things. Sometimes Rufus heard his mother praying for him. When Friends visiting in the ministry came to his home, Rufus heard them say his name in their prayers too. One visiting minister put his hands on Rufus' head and made a prophecy about him, a prophecy that he would grow into a great, spiritual man. (A prophecy is *very important*.)

Now, with all of this going on, you might think that Rufus Jones was always very good. No, not so. Nobody can be good all the time. Rufus Jones was just like the rest of us. Sometimes he did things that were not very good at all.

One day he went to a nearby house where his friend lived. He knocked on the back door. Nobody answered. The inside door

was open. Rufus opened the screen and went in. He walked straight through the porch and into the kitchen. No one was at home. The neighbor's house seemed strange with no neighbors inside.

Rufus looked around the quiet kitchen. His eyes stopped on a wonderful fuchsia plant in full bloom. Rufus admired the long-hanging, bright flowers. He wondered what it would be like to touch just one perfect flower.

Carefully Rufus stretched out his arm. His fingers tickled the smooth petals. Maybe, he thought, maybe no one will care if I pick just one. Before he had even finished the thought, Rufus held a splash of brilliant red in his hand.

Who knows what came over Rufus next! He could not stop after picking just one. He picked another and another and another...until finally Rufus stopped. He stopped because there were no more flowers to pick! Every flower, every spark of brilliant fuchsia lay around him. The remaining vines looked empty and sad. Rufus knew that he had done something very wrong. He wished he could put the flowers back again. But that was impossible. Suddenly he felt frightened. What would the neighbors say when they found their beautiful fuchsia blossoms all over the floor?

"Maybe, just maybe," Rufus thought anxiously, "if I hide the flowers, things won't look so bad." Where could he put them? He looked around the kitchen. Any hiding place in the house would be found for certain.

Rufus walked out through the open back door. There, right under his feet, he saw the perfect hiding place. He could drop the flowers down the wide crack between the two boards of the top step and no one would ever know. Carefully, he dropped the flowers through the crack into the dark space under the steps.

Back and forth he walked. The heap of flowers in the kitchen grew smaller and smaller. Nothing showed in the darkness under the steps. But just as Rufus was ready to drop the last blossom through the crack, the neighbors drove into the yard.

They were astonished at what they found. They shouted angrily at Rufus Jones.

But what hurt Rufus even more than the angry words was the plain fact that he knew he had not been very good. He had discovered something inside himself that is hard to control. And that "something" is what makes trying to be good so difficult.

Reprinted from *Jesus Who Was He?*
Friends General Conference, 1991.

For Discussion:

1. I wonder what part of the story you like best...
2. I wonder if you ever had visiting ministers visit your home...
3. What did the boy Rufus find inside himself? Do you ever feel like you have found something that can get away from you, inside yourself?
4. I wonder what Rufus might do next...
5. I wonder what this story tells us about the beliefs of Friends?

Activities

In addition to free-choice art and play, try:

1. Building the neighbor's kitchen out of blocks.
2. Cutting the hanging plant out of paper.
3. Planting a hanging basket of flowers, then giving it to someone in meeting.
4. Making a temptation collage.

John Woolman and the Bird

By Caroline C. Pineo

It was a spring day in the early 1700's. The place was Rancocas, New Jersey, some 18 miles northeast of Philadelphia.

Here on a farm beside the cedar-colored Rancocas Creek lived a small boy, happy in all the joys any small boy on a farm can know, sharing in the chores all boys had in those days, learning not only from his family and meeting friends, but also from himself as he discovered the world.

One day John went on an errand to a neighbor's. Crossing through an orchard he

noticed a robin sitting on her nest. As he approached she flew back and forth, chirping in concern for her young, as mother birds always do. John reached down and picked up some stones and began throwing them at the flying bird; a good chance to practice marksmanship. It wasn't long before a stone did hit the mark and the robin fell to the ground dead.

At first there was a sense of thrill but soon he began to think about what he had done and what it would mean to the baby birds in the nest. Without a mother, there would be no one to feed them, and without food they could not live. At last he decided what he should do...he climbed the tree and quickly killed each of the tiny birds. "I went on my errand," wrote John Woolman in his diary years later, "but for some hours could think of little else but my cruel conduct toward the poor bird." Reprinted from *Candles in the Dark*

For Discussion:

1. I wonder why John threw a stone at the robin...
2. I wonder how John felt when he saw the result of what he had done...
3. Do you like to hit targets? What targets are acceptable? What targets do you think are wrong?
4. I wonder why John Woolman could remember what he did and how he felt years after this incident...

Activities

In addition to free-choice play and art, activities may include:

1. Talking with a birdwatcher. (Find out why the birdwatcher does not hunt, but only watches.)
2. Making an environment out of paper or blocks that the young John Woolman play figure can walk through.
3. Making bird houses or bird feeders.

The Sermon in the Wilderness

By Anna Petit Broomwell

“My Friend, I have explained that I must have the horse, and that I will deposit with thee his full value until his safe return within a week’s time.”

The tall man spoke a trifle wearily, as though he had had almost enough of the argument one hot day on the edge of the great Pennsylvania forest. The dust in front of the Rockville tavern still hung in a cloud where the coach, on its weekly arrival from the distant city had stirred it a-fresh. The group of farmers, waiting for mail and news of the outside world, had watched with curious eyes this stranger descend from the high seat beside the driver. They had noted the broad-brimmed hat, carpet bag and closely fitting “store clothes” that marked him as city-bred, and the foreign way he used his hands when he talked. Their natural distrust had melted, however, before the radiant smile of more than ordinary good-will that lighted up the blue eyes and wrinkled the lean face as he strode briskly toward them crying, “The peace of God be with you, my friends! From which of you may I obtain a horse for a journey into the wilderness?”

Several minutes of parley followed between the inn-keeper and the stranger, not a word being lost by the eager group of listeners. This man insisted that he must travel for three days straight into the heart of the forest, “along a way that would be opened” to him. The innkeeper objected that there was only one trail a horse could travel and this exceedingly dangerous, with treacherous fords and rocky pitfalls. Did the stranger know that the three-days’ trail led only to a lumber camp, and that honest men who valued their lives or their purses did well to avoid this place? Was the gentleman’s business so imperative that he would risk his life?

“It is my Father’s business, and the most imperative in the world,” answered the stranger calmly. “I have received instructions

from Above and go without fear, for the Spirit upholds me. So, if I may hire a horse of thee—“

At length a wiry little mare was brought out. The stranger, though urged to remain over night, refused courteously, explaining that he carried food and was accustomed to sleep in the open. As he paid for the mare and was about to ride away, the inn-keeper inquired, “What is your name, stranger?”

“Stephen Grellet, of New York, and I go to carry the message of God to those who will listen.”

As the little mare and the man climbed the rough path and disappeared into the birches that edged the dark pines, one man remarked, “A Quaker, I know by his speech, and a godly man. But he cannot melt the hearts of those men with his soft tongue.”

Stephen Grellet found a single trail winding now along the slippery banks of a rushing stream, now over treacherous moss-covered rocks, skirting steep cliffs, and twice plunging through the river where the mare was forced to swim. During the first afternoon he passed several clearings with little cabins, but after this he saw no work of human hands. Though no sounds except those of the forest came to his ears, he moved with a radiance in his eyes and with a smile upon his lips, as though he were listening to the cheery words of a dear companion.

Early in the afternoon of the third day, Stephen Grellet found the trail widened into a corduroy road where horses had evidently been used to drag logs down to the river bank. Stephen suddenly found himself on the edge of a space from which all trees and underbrush had been cleared. Facing him on the far side stood a large three-sided log shed; to the left and right of this shed were several old cabins.

Stephen Grellet reined in his mare in great perplexity. The message that had come to him had been very clear, and, as was the habit of his life, he had followed the leading of the Spirit in perfect faith. He knew that he was to come to this spot in the wilderness and here he was to preach the simple and holy truth of God’s presence. It had not occurred to him,

that as evidently was the case, the lumbermen might not be there. He knew without question, however, that this was the place where he must preach. Alighting, he tied his mare to a sapling, leaving her to browse the long wood grass, and made his way to the central cabin where rough tables stood on a slightly raised floor. Mounting this platform, he faced the forest, a strange inner light making his face glow. During his long life he had traveled to the far corners of the earth, defying dangers and discomforts in order to carry the simple assurance of God's love to all people; yet never had he felt more completely the Divine Presence flooding through and around his whole being than when now he stood alone in the deserted camp.

"Oh, God—thou art here—here!" he cried, stretching wide his arms. When he finished talking, he stood in silence with head bowed. Then, with infinite peace in his heart, he mounted the little mare and rode away, back to Rockville and the world.

Six years later Stephen Grellet was in London. He had gone there, as he had gone into the forests of Pennsylvania, guided only by the Spirit.

Late one afternoon, he walked on London Bridge as the setting sun was throwing a broken red path on the oily water of the Thames. He was very tired, for he threw all his strength into the struggle to show to others the Light that burned in his own soul. As he stood looking at the spires of the vast city against the glow of the evening sky, he prayed for faith and peace. Suddenly the roar of London died in his ears and he heard again the gentle sighing of the pines in the Pennsylvania forest. Just as truly God was with him here—

The reverie of Stephen Grellet was shattered by someone seizing him roughly by the elbow. He turned quickly to face a broad, muscular man, with rugged face and eyes of piercing eagerness, who cried in great excitement, as he peered into Stephen Grellet's face, "I have got you at last! I have got you at last!"

Stephen returned the gaze calmly, but could see nothing familiar about the man except that he was certainly an American.

"Friend," he replied, "I think thou art mistaken."

"But I am not—I cannot be! I have carried every line of your face in my memory for six years. How I have longed to see it again!"

"Who, then, art thou, and where dost thou think we have met?" inquired Stephen.

"Did you not preach in the great forest of Pennsylvania, three days' trip from the village of Rockville, six years ago last midsummer?"

"I did, but I saw no one there to listen."

The man held out his hands to Stephen Grellet—strong hands that had known hard toil. "I was there," he replied, his voice full of awe as the memory rose again before him. "I was the head of the woodmen who had deserted those shanties. We had moved on into the forest and were putting up more cabins, when I discovered that I had left my lever at the old settlement. So, leaving my men at work, I went back alone for my tool. As I approached the old place, I heard a voice. Trembling and agitated, I drew near, and saw you through the chinks in the timber walls of our dining shanty. I listened to you, and something in your face or in your words, or both, stirred me as I had never been stirred before. I went back to my men. I was miserable for weeks; I had no Bible, no book of any kind, not one to speak to about divine things.

"At last I found the strength I needed. I obtained a Bible; I told my men the blessed news that God was near us, and we learned together to ask forgiveness and to lead forth to tell thousands of others of the joy and faith you brought into the forest."

Reprinted from *The Friendly Story Caravan*
Pendle Hill Publications, 1970

For Discussion:

1. I wonder what "a radiant smile of more than ordinary good-will means... I wonder if you have ever met anyone with such a smile..."

2. I wonder how Stephen Grellet’s journey is like that of Mary Fisher... I wonder how it is different...

3. I wonder how this sermon is different from those heard in churches...

Activities

1. Make shoe box dioramas for different parts of the journey.

2. Chart similarities and differences between two stories. Homeschoolers may wish to write a comparison composition.

William Picket Meets the Robbers

By Clarence E. Pickett

Jonathan Lutz made this story into a musical play by inserting a chorus of songs into this side-coached story. Suggested songs are in parenthesis..

William Pickett, the great uncle of Clarence Pickett, lived in a little Quaker colony in southern Indiana. He was a truck gardener. (“The Garden Song”)

Not far from where he lived was a small coal mine. (Sing “16 tons”.)

Unfortunately the coal miners who drew their pay for their mining on Saturday evening often spent most of the money promptly on drink. William sold a great deal of his produce to these coal miners, so every Seventh-day afternoon he went into the mining village to collect for the vegetables he had sold. (Sing “She’ll Be Coming Round the Mountain.”)

Recently, some of the miners, looking for more money for liquor, had been known to rob travelers going through the woods. As he came home after dark through a wooded area, William took from his pocket the roll of bills which represented most of the money he had collected and put it under a bag in his wagon. He left only seven dollars in his pocket.

Sure enough, the thieves soon arrived. “Put up your hands!” they said to William Pickett. They took the seven dollars from his pocket.

“Is this all you have?” their leader asked gruffly.

“That,” said William, “is all that I have on me.”

(Hum “Nobody Knows the Trouble I Seen” over the reading of the story.) The robbers let him go, and he drove on toward home. But on his way he got to meditating on whether what he had said was, in fact, true—they did get all that which was on him—but his intention had been to deceive them for he did have forty dollars in bills in the wagon. His mind was uneasy, and so he turned around and drove back, tied his horse to a tree in the middle of the woods, and started out to see if he could find the robbers. Finally he found them and told them the whole story.

“What I told you, in fact, was true,” he said, “but I was not entirely honest with you, for I have in my wagon forty dollars more. If you feel it is the right thing to do, come with me and get the money.”

The robbers were astonished and touched by the experience, and the unusual way in which William Pickett had treated them. They hesitated; then their leader stepped forward:

“Take your seven dollars,” he said, handing the money to William. “You are an honest man, and we cannot take what rightly belongs to you.”

Reprinted from *Candles in the*

Dark

For Discussion:

1. I wonder why William Picket returned and gave money that was rightfully his to the robbers...

2. I wonder if there is a difference is between God Within and conscience....

3. I wonder if this story has any connection with the Quaker Testimony of Integrity...

George Fox Finds God

**When George Fox was a young man,
he went looking for God.**

1

**He looked for God in church, but he
did not find God there.**

2

**He looked for God in London, but he
did not find God there.**

3

**He looked for God in books, but he did
not find God there.**

4

People said, "Don't worry so much George. Get married." But George did not want to get married. He wanted to find God.

5

People said, "Don't worry so much George. Become a soldier." But George did not want to become a soldier. He wanted to find God.

6

People said, "Don't worry so much George. Smoke a pipe." But George did not want to smoke a pipe." He wanted to find God.

7

People said, "Don't worry so much George. Sing hymns." But George did not want to sing hymns. He wanted to find God.

8

After two years of looking, George Fox did find God! Do you know where?

9

Choose your own ending:

George Fox said, "And when all my hopes in them and in all men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could tell what to do, then, oh then, I heard a voice which said, 'There is one, Christ Jesus that can speak to thy condition.' And when I heard it, my heart did leap for joy."

10

He found that God was speaking to him in his own heart.

10

He realized that anyone can hear the voice of God and that God is the same now as when messages were revealed by the prophets.

10

Where is God for you?

11

John Woolman Listens To God

John Woolman is not a story, but a series of events in John Woolman's life. Each event may be expanded into a story maintaining the core idea of listening and doing. As with the George Fox story, lines may be cut apart to create a storyline book. The above may be cut out as the title. Discard this paragraph.

Adults and teens may wish to have a separate discussion group of John Woolman's Journal while working with this material and younger children.

For discussion:

1. I wonder if anyone here has ever listened to the Safe Guide... I wonder if you have ever thought that God was asking you to change in any way... Were you able to change? Was it difficult to change? Easy to change?
2. When John Woolman spoke against slavery, most people thought that they needed slaves to help them do the work. Have you ever felt that you did not want to do what everyone else, perhaps everyone else in your school, was doing?
3. Lotteries are very popular now. I wonder how you feel about lotteries...
4. John Woolman made a statement by wearing undyed clothing. What have you seen people wearing today that sends a message?

Activities: In addition to free choice play and art activities, you may want to initiate:

1. Building John Woolman's store from blocks. Make items to stock the store in the art area. Use play people as "shoppers" who like to talk with John Woolman in his undyed clothing.
2. Building a larger store from boxes and crates. If your meeting is large enough, stock the store with those items which "carry a message" such as craft items from Third World Cooperatives or recycled products.
3. Making t-shirts with a message.

John Woolman Listens To God

Quakers believe that each person can listen to God. Most Quakers listen to God, that still, small voice inside each of us. John Woolman was a Quaker who listened to this still, small voice more than most Quakers. He called this Inner Voice his Safe Guide.

It is very hard to listen because often we find out that the Safe Guide wants us to do something that we really would rather not...something that is difficult and, sometimes, hard to change.

John Woolman liked to change as he listened to the Safe Guide. Even when Friends laughed at him or could not

follow John Woolman's lead, John Woolman continued to listen, to hear, and to follow God's ways.

Here are some of the things John Woolman heard and some of the ways he changed after hearing them.

1

One day after meeting for worship, John Woolman realized that he had tried to speak his own will (ideas) out of the silence. On that day, he learned to attend close to the Safe Guide before speaking.

2

One day, John Woolman felt badly when he was asked to write a bill of sale for a slave. He did it, but felt so badly that he never wrote another bill of sale for a slave even though he could earn money by doing so.

3

At another time, John Woolman realized that he was too selfish and vain, especially about clothes. He felt God was asking him to wear his clothes until he needed new ones.

4

And so, he wore his old clothes until he could not wear them any longer.

5

Soon John Woolman discovered that slaves were used to mine silver and to make the dye for clothing. He changed even more! First, he refused to eat from silver plates.

6

Then, he began to wear undyed clothing as soon as his old, dyed clothing had worn out.

7

Finally, he even decided to sell only undyed cloth in his store.

8

John Woolman travelled a great deal among Friends. But, he felt uncomfortable when he stayed with

Friends who owned slaves. In his thank-you letters, he began to tell his hosts that slavery was wrong. He asked them to think about freeing their slaves.

9

John cared a lot for his fellow creatures, especially animals. He stopped riding horses because he felt that was it was cruel to the horse.

10

When visiting Friends, John Woolman found that some Friends had lotteries, and so he talked with people about the greed and selfishness that hides behind lotteries.

11

Sometimes John Woolman thought that it would be fine to be famous, but he knew God wanted him to be content and happy just as he was.

We still remember John Woolman. Perhaps we could say that he did become famous. However, he did not become famous because he tried to be famous, but because he had a sense of knowing the Safe Guide, and because he was not afraid to do what the Safe Guide asked of him.

12

Quakers II

Quakers II was originally intended to expand from the individual experience of Quakers I to the silent worship of Friends or group listening and obedience. The first story of Quakers II offers the opportunity to talk about various aspects of the peace testimony and its roots in meeting for worship. The second opens the possibility of empowering children to take responsibility for meeting. Both stories illustrate the strength and power of silent meeting.

One of the ways in which adults and teens wrestle with stories is to simplify and tell the story on a level appropriate for children. Presented here in their original form, these stories are long and you will probably want to do some shortening, taking care to maintain the heart of each. Then find your own additional stories, preserving the core of each in such a way that children may find the heart of the story without your assistance.

If you do not have access to Quaker journals, try some of the popular children's picture books such as the *Obadiah* series or *Ruth's Gift: A Family Legend Expanded* by Cathy Gaskill, or one of several older children's books by Chuck Fager.

Fierce Feathers

By L.V. Hodgkin

The sunlight lay in patches on the steep roof of the meetinghouse of Easton Township in the State of New York. It was a bright summer morning in the year 1775. The children of Easton Township liked their wooden meetinghouse. It was made of rough-hewn logs, placed together hastily in order to provide some sort of shelter for the worshipping Friends. If a boy or girl happened to be sitting in the corner seat, he or she could see between the logs right out into the woods. The untamed wilderness still stretched away on all sides around the newly-cleared settlement of Easton.

Moreover, there were no glass windows in the log house as yet, only open spaces provided with wooden shutters that could be closed, if necessary, during a summer storm. Another larger, open space at one end of the building would be closed by a door when cold weather came. At present the summer air met no hindrance as it blew in softly, laden with the fragrant scents of flowers and pine trees, stirring the children's hair as it lightly passed. Every now and then a drowsy bee would come blundering in by mistake, and after buzzing around for some

time among the assembled Friends, it would make its way out again through one of the chinks between the logs. The children, as they sat in meeting, always hoped that a butterfly might also find its way in, some fine day—before the winter came, and before the window spaces of the new meetinghouse had to be filled with glass, and a door fastened at the end of the room to keep out the cold. Especially on a mid-week meeting like today, they often found it difficult to “think meeting thoughts” in the silence, or even to attend to what was being said, so busy were they watching for the entrance of that long desired butterfly.

For children thought about very much the same kind of things, and had the same kind of difficulties in meeting then as now; even though it is more than two hundred years since that sunny morning in Easton Township, when the sunlight lay in patches on the roof.

It was not only the children who found silent worship difficult that still summer morning. There were traces of anxiety on the faces of many Friends and even on the placid countenances of the Elders. There, at the head of the meeting, sat Friend Zebulon Hoxie, the grandfather of most of the

children who were present. Also gathered were his sons, their wives and families, and a sprinkling of other Friends.

The children had never before seen one of the Friends who sat next by their grandfather's side that day. They had heard that his name was Robert Nisbet, and that he had just arrived after having walked for two days, thirty miles through the wilderness country to sit with Friends at New Easton during their midweek meeting. The children had no idea why he had come, so they fixed their eyes intently on the stranger and stirred gently in their seats when at last he rose to speak. They had liked his kind, open face as soon as they saw it. They liked still better the sound of the rich, clear voice that made it easy for even children to listen. But they liked the words of his text best of all: "The Beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him. He shall cover them all the day long."

Robert Nisbet lingered over the first words of his message as if they were dear to him. His voice was full and mellow, and the words seemed as if they were part of the rich tide of summer life that flowed around. He paused a moment, and then went on,

"And now, how shall the Beloved of the Lord be thus in safety covered? Even as saith the Psalmist, 'He shall cover thee with His feathers and under His wings shalt thou trust.'" Then, changing his tones a little and speaking more lightly, though gravely still, he continued: "You have done well, dear Friends, to stay on valiantly in your homes, when all your neighbors have fled; and therefore are these messages sent to you by me. These promises of covering and of shelter are truly meant for you. Make them your own and you shall not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day."

Here the boys and girls looked at one another. Now they knew what had brought the stranger! He had come because he had

heard of the danger that threatened the little clearing of settlers in the woods. For though New Easton and East Hoosack lay thirty miles apart they were both links in the long chain of Quaker Settlements that had been formed to separate the territory belonging to the Dutch Traders along the Hudson River from the English settlements along the valley of the Connecticut. The Quakers occupied a belt of neutral ground between the Dutch and English who had been disputing with one another.

A fiercer contest was now brewing, no longer between two handfuls of Colonists, but between the inhabitants of two continents. For it was just before the outbreak of the Revolutionary War of 1775.

"You did well, Friends," the speaker continued, "well to ask to be permitted to exercise your own judgment without blame to the authorities, well to say to them in all courtesy and charity, 'You are clear of us in that you have warned us'—and to stay on in your dwellings and to carry out your accustomed work. The report of your courage and faith hath reached us in our abiding place at East Hoosack, and the Lord hath charged me to come on foot through the wilderness country these thirty miles, to meet with you today and to bear to you these two messages from Him, 'The Beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him,' and 'He shall cover thee with His feathers all the day long'."

The visitor sat down again in his seat. The furrowed line of anxiety in old Zebulon Hoxie's high forehead smoothed itself away; the eyes of one or two of the younger women Friends filled with tears. As the speaker's voice ceased, little Susannah Hoxie's head, which had been drooping lower and lower, finally found a resting place, and was encircled by her mother's arm.

Her sister Dinah, thought "it is very hot, and I am sleepy, too, but I don't go to sleep.

I do wish a butterfly would come in at the window...just for once—or a bird with feathers. I liked what that visiting Friend said about being ‘covered with feathers all the day long’. I wish I was all covered with feathers like a little bird. I wish there were feathers in meeting for tickling...” She turned in her corner seat and looked through the slit in the wall—why there were feathers close outside the wall of the meetinghouse! What could they be? Very quietly Dinah moved her head, so that her eye came closer to the slit. But when she looked again, the feathers had mysteriously disappeared—nothing was to be seen now but a slight trembling of the tree branches in the wilderness woods at a little distance.

In the meanwhile her brother Benjamin Hoxie was also thinking of the visiting Friend’s sermon. “He said it was a valiant thing to do, to stay here when all the neighbors have left. I didn’t know Friends could do valiant things. I thought only soldiers were valiant.”

“Thou shalt not be afraid for the arrow that flieth by day,” he thought to himself. “Well, there are no arrows in this part of the country any longer.”

But it was gentle Mrs. Hoxie, with her arms still round her baby daughter, who kept the Friend’s words longest in her heart. “Shall dwell in safety by Him—the Beloved of the Lord,” she repeated to herself over and over again.

And then, in her turn, Mrs. Hoxie looked up, as her daughter had done, and saw the same three tall feathers creeping above the sill of the open meetinghouse window frame. For just one moment her heart, that usually beat so calmly under her gray Quaker robe, seemed to stand absolutely still. She went white to the lips. Then “shall dwell in safety by Him,” the words flashed back to her mind. She looked across to where her husband sat with an urgent look. He met her eyes, read them, followed the

direction in which she gazed. Then he, too, saw the feathers—three, five, seven, nine sticking up in a row. Another instant, and a face appeared, looking over the sill. The moment most to be dreaded in the lives of all American settlers. An Indian chief, covered with war paint!

All the assembled Friends were aware of his presence by this time, and were watching the window now, though not one of them moved. Mrs. Hoxie glanced towards her youngest daughter and found to her great relief that Dinah, too, had fallen asleep, her head against the wooden wall. The others were mostly older than Benjamin, who was twelve. They were, therefore, far too well trained in Quaker stillness to move for any Indians. They would not move until the Friends at the head of the meeting had shaken hands and given the signal to disperse. Nevertheless, the hearts of even the elder girls were beating very fast. Benjamin’s lips were tightly shut, and with eyes that were unusually bright, he followed every movement of the Indian chief, who, as it seemed in one bound and without making the slightest noise, had moved round to the open doorway.

There he stood in full warpaint and feathers looking with piercing eyes at each man in turn, as if one of them must have the weapons that he sought. But the Friends were entirely unarmed. There was not a gun, or a rifle, or a sword to be found in any of their dwelling houses, so there could not be any in their peaceful meeting.

A minute later, a dozen other Indians, also in warpaint, stood beside the chief. Benjamin found it hard not to tremble now as he saw thirteen sharp arrows taken from their quivers. He turned his head to look at his grandfather and saw Zebulon Hoxie gazing full at the chief. No word was spoken, but in silence two powers were measured against one another—the power of hate, and the power of love. For steady

friendliness to these new visitors was written in every line of Zebulon Hoxie's face.

The children never knew how long that steadfast gaze lasted. But at length, to Benjamin's utter astonishment, the Indian's eyes fell. The Chief glanced round the meetinghouse three times. Then, signed to his followers. The thirteen arrows were noiselessly replaced in thirteen quivers, the thirteen bows were laid down and rested against the wall. Many footsteps, lighter than falling snow, crossed the floor; the Indian chief, unarmed, sat himself down in the nearest seat, with his followers in all their warpaint, but also unarmed, close around him.

The meeting did not stop. The meeting not only continued; it increased in solemnity and in power.

"Cover thee with His feathers all the day long."

The Friends sat in their accustomed stillness. But the Indians sat more still than any of them. The Indians seemed at home in the silence. Motionless they sat, as a group of trees on a windless day or as a tranquil pool unstirred by the smallest breeze; silent, as if they were themselves a part of Nature's own silence.

The slow minutes slipped past. The peace brooded and grew, and deepened. "Am I dreaming?" Mrs. Hoxie thought to herself more than once, and then, raising her eyes she saw the Indians still in the same place, and knew it was no dream. She saw, too, that Benjamin's eyes were riveted to some objects hanging from the strangers' waists, that none of the other Friends appeared to see.

At last, when worship ended, the two Friends at the head of the meeting shook hands. Then Zebulon Hoxie advanced to the Indian chief and, with signs, invited him and his followers to come to his house close at hand. With signs, they accepted.

When the company had arrived at the house, Zebulon put bread and cheese on the table, and invited all to help themselves. Robert Nisbet, the visiting Friend, who could speak and understand French, had a conversation with one of the Indians in that language, and this was what he said: "We surrounded your house, meaning to destroy every living person within it. But when we saw you sitting with your door open, and without weapons, we had no wish any longer to hurt you. Now, we would fight for you, and defend you ourselves from all who wish you ill."

Soon the visitors had all disappeared as noiselessly as they had come. Benjamin stole to his mother's side. "Mother, did you see, did you see?" he whispered. "They were not friendly Indians. Did you not notice what those things were, hanging from their waists? They were scalps—scalps of men and women that those Indians had killed," and again he shuddered.

His mother stooped and kissed him. "Yea my son," she answered, I did see. When thou dost remember those human scalps, pray for the slayers and for the slain. Only for thyself and for us, have no fear. Remember, rather the blessing of that other Benjamin, for whom I named thee. 'The Beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him. He shall cover him all the day long.'"

From *The Peaceway Booklet Series*
Yorkshire Friends Service
Committee, 1936

For Discussion

1. I wonder what the children of our meeting think about while they are sitting in the silence... I wonder what they notice with their eyes... I wonder what they notice with their ears...
2. I wonder what we would do if someone very surprising came into our meeting...

3. In the story, what changed the situation from one of danger and fear to love and friendship...
4. I wonder how worship feels to you. Do you have a sense of deepening such as was described in the story... I wonder if people in our meeting feel peaceful during meeting for worship...
5. I wonder how you feel about the words of Robert Nesbitt during meeting for worship...
6. I wonder if there are any words that you like to repeat over and over during meeting for worship as Mrs. Hoxie did...
7. The author calls the words of the visiting Friend a sermon. I wonder how this is different from sermons in churches...
8. I wonder why Mrs. Hoxie asked Benjamin to pray for the slayers and the slain...

Activities

1. Build the meetinghouse out of Lincoln Logs or twigs. Retell the story using Quaker play figures.
2. Look up biblical references.
3. Act out the story, perhaps in a meeting house of play cloths draped over tables. Spend time in the art center making costumes first.

The Children of Reading Meeting

By Elinor P. Briggs

“What are we going to do?” Hannah’s chin quivered despite herself. Children nine years old didn’t cry.

In England in the 1660's, Quaker children had to grow up very quickly. Going to meeting was not a safe thing to do. The King did not want people to meet in groups for any reason except to go to the Church of which he was the head. At any time people

in meeting might be arrested by a Justice of the Peace and taken to prison.

This morning Hannah found that her mother and father had not come home from a meeting that they had gone to the night before.

“What will we do?” she wondered aloud.

“We’ll do just what Father and Mother would expect us to do,” her fourteen-year-old brother Tom replied. I can take care of the farm and you can take care of Little Josh and the house, until Mother and Father are let out of prison.”

“I wish we could see them,” Hannah handed Josh a spoon so that he could eat his bowl of porridge. “The prison is so dark, dirty, and cold. I wonder if they have anything to eat?”

“Mother always takes food to the Quakers in prison,” Tom remembered. “We might try to do that, if they don’t get home soon.”

“If only they had stayed home last night and not gone to that meeting,” Hannah’s voice broke.

“Of course they had to go! They had to be faithful! Now get Josh ready. It’s First Day and nearly time for us to go to meeting!” Tom’s voice was resolute.

“To *m...meeting*? But, I’m afraid!” Hannah cried.

“What better place for us to go, then,” Tom was gentle but firm.

As they made their way to the house where the meeting for worship was usually held, they were joined by other children. Their parents had not come home either. And, everyone knew that the parents were in prison.

The house where Friends usually met was locked and guarded. The children went on to Friend Lambold’s orchard where meetings had been held before. There the gate was padlocked shut.

“My father’s granary!” one of the older boys suggested.

In the dim light of the old building the children settled themselves on bundles of hay. Trustingly, Josh snuggled up against Hannah. Together the children settled into silence. Out of the quietness came a soft voice offering a prayer. "Help our parents. Help them to be brave and faithful, and make us all brave and faithful, too." A calmness came over

Hannah. The peaceful feeling stayed with her even when she heard the sound of tramping feet outside the granary.

The door burst open! The children looked up to see the dreaded Justice of the peace silhouetted in the door. They all remained still and quiet.

"Yet more of you itching to be put in jail!" the man shouted. His eyes became adjusted to the dimness.

"Brats! By my life! Quaker brats!" Then he ordered his men into the granary to drive the children out. Hands pulled and jerked them out into the road. The Justice of the peace ordered the older boys to be beaten. He used a cane with a spear in the end.

The boys, black and blue and very sore, limped home, assisted by the rest of the children.

"What shall we do next First Day?" Hannah asked as she bathed Tom's back.

"We'll go again," Tom answered without hesitating. "Nobody can stop us from worshipping God together. We found strength and courage today. Nothing can keep us from following the Light."

Reprinted from *Opening Doors to Quaker Worship*
Friends General Conference, 1994

For discussion:

1. I wonder what keeps people from meeting in this day and age...

2. I wonder if the children in our meeting would continue to meet if the adults were off someplace else...

3. Why do you think the children continued to meet without their parents?

4. How does the story say that Hannah felt during meeting for worship? How do you feel during meeting for worship?

5. Do you know of any Quakers who have been put in prison recently? Why are Friends sometimes put in prison today?

Activities

In addition to free choice block and art areas, you may wish to offer the following:

1. Choose favorite parts of the story. Incorporate little people into shoebox dioramas depicting favorite parts of the story.

2. Make the story into a play.

BIBLE STORIES

Sheep and Shepherd

Before there was Godly Play and Jerome Berryman, there was Sofia Cavalletti, a Montessori teacher who taught poor children in the Vatican of Rome. She found that the Shepherd and Sheep stories brought the children great comfort. In fact, Cavalletti felt that the shepherd and sheep stories were the only Bible stories suitable for children up to the age of about 10. This is also the age at which I recommend starting work with *Discovering Our Faith Through Worship Sharing*, a collection of foundational quotes.

The Sheep and Shepherd stories most closely parallel the work of Jerome Berryman and the Faith & Play of Friends General Conference because we all go back to Cavalletti roots. Through playing these gentle stories together in intergenerational settings, adults as well as children may enter the story for the first time. By manipulating the materials while listening to a story, each participant will have the freedom to hear and decide, to accept, reject, or change the story. Thus, we are also becoming accepting, understanding, even tolerant of one another's points of view.

Before introducing the materials, make or purchase an attractive storage container. In their book, *Young Children and Worship*, Jerome Berryman and Sonja Stewart suggest that these containers be golden boxes. I enclose the play figures in a canvas storage bag. Mark the side of your box or bag with a symbol, which identifies contents for non-readers.

A clearly marked storage container helps young children put away materials for

the next person. The attractiveness of the container indicates that these toys are to be used in a careful manner.

If you are storyteller, practice telling the story that you select. Or, you can ask an older child to read the story as you move play figures.

If you wish, order a set of play figures from Mary Snyder at:

dutchhavenf38@gmail.com

As Sofia Cavalletti suggested, there is a small storybook in the storage bag so that all materials are in one place.

Deeper understanding will occur for everyone involved with repetition of the story each week for four to six weeks. Depending on the interests of the children, follow-up art and writing activities may be changed or presented as choices after each telling of the story. Ongoing art, play, and drama responses also work well.

Using Play Materials

Psalm 23 is a good introduction to shepherd and sheep stories and to the use of the figures.

1. Store materials on a high shelf because they are to be used with care during special times. Once children have been introduced to the contents of the box or bag and have learned how to play through the stories, you may want to place the container in a more accessible learning center or on a lower shelf. A series of bags may be suspended from child-height knobs along a storage wall.

2. Demonstrate taking the box or bag off the shelf. Show how to carry the container with care. Sit down smoothly

and put the closed box or bag in the middle of the circle or between you and your child. Reflect a moment.

3. Get ready for the story. Before taking out the materials, invite children to talk a bit about their own experiences of care. Some possible questions to precede shepherd and sheep stories include: “I wonder how you find food... Water? A place to live? I wonder who takes care of you... I wonder if you have been afraid... I wonder who might help you if you were frightened. I wonder what someone could do to help you if you were frightened...”

3. Show children the bag or box. In the case of a bag, you might say, “I have something to show you.” Move slowly. “This is a special bag.” Show your audience the symbol on the side of the bag to identify it. “I wonder what this might be?” Listen to, but do not contradict the children’s ideas. “Mmmm, you have good ideas.”

4. Open the bag or box with an air of mystery. (At this point, most groups of children need a reminder to stay seated, to look, to watch and to listen.) Bring out pieces one at a time and wonder about their use. “Oh look, here is a green cloth. I wonder how this cloth might be used...” Smooth out the felt on the floor or table in front of you while the children guess what the green piece might represent. “Do you think there is something else in the container?” (More guesses.) “Ah yes, here is a piece of blue felt. What might it be? And a piece of brown, jagged looking felt.” Smooth each piece on the floor and wonder together about their uses. Once the three pieces of felt are placed on the

floor or table, take out one sheep. “Oh look, this is a sheep! This sheep is named Geoffrey.” And carefully hand the sheep to Geoffrey to hold. “And here is another sheep. This sheep is called Lucas.” Hand that sheep to Lucas. Continue until each child has a sheep to hold and, possibly, move with the story.

5. Read or tell Psalm 23. As you read or tell the Psalm, ask the children to move their figures in correspondence to the text. Or, ask an older child to read, leaving you free to help manipulate the figures. This works best when the adult leader or when a practiced older child handles the shepherd.

6. Wonder together. Some ideas that you might use with Psalm 23: “I wonder how the shepherd takes care of the sheep... What do you think the shepherd would do if the sheep were frightened? I wonder how the shepherd feels while taking care of the sheep... I wonder how the sheep feel as the shepherd cares for them?”

“Do you have any animals at home? Do you help care for them? How? What do you do for your animals? Are your animals ever frightened? What do you do when they are afraid? How does it feel to take care of your animals?”

(Please do NOT try to use all questions included here the first time you tell the story. Select different queries appropriate for your audience each time you return to the same story.)

7. Repeat. If the children want to do the Psalm again, redistribute the figures. An older child may want to read rather than tell the story at this time. If necessary, help the older child handle the Bible and

find the passage. Or, the children may want to play through the Psalm in their own way, adding their language, ideas, and insights. Recognize that as they rework the story, a most important moment happens. "It is the time of the conversation with the Inner Teacher when the child reconsiders, without the adult, what has been presented and enters into its meaning."¹

8. Clean up. Lead the group in putting away materials. Point out where this bag or box will be kept now that it has been introduced. If during play, the shepherd and sheep become integrated with other toys such as blocks, be certain that the story figures are carefully returned to their own container. In some programs, they simply have a special, labeled place on a shelf.

9. Response Choices. Response choices may be offered before or after the initial clean-up. One response choice may be further play with the figures.

A second choice may be playing through the main idea that you are hoping children will discover using other toys. For example, children like to care for stuffed animals by building "houses" for them from blocks or found objects such as cardboard boxes.

Additional questions during such play might include: "Where does bear live? What does bear eat? How could you care for a bear? How about this frog? What is different about it?"

The third choice, art, is the most frequently used response to the story at this time. Whether in a religious education program or at home, invite children to work out parts of each story

that are important to them in media that they have chosen. Perhaps say something like this: "Think about some work that you would like to do with this story. Here are some materials. (Paper, glue, cotton balls or real wool and markers). What part of the story would you like to work on? How would you like to do your work?" As each individual tells you his/her idea, ask that child to move away from your story circle and start working on art. Encourage integration of media.

10. Final clean-up and closing. Ask children to put all materials back for the next person, then gather children into a closing circle. Perhaps sing a sheep song. I like to bless children as they rejoin their families.

The Good Shepherd

After at least one repetition of Psalm 23, go on to the story of the Good Shepherd, John 10:1-5. Again, practice telling the story your way before working with children.

1. Get ready. This time, introduce the story as a parable. Make it sound exciting and mysterious. Perhaps say, "Jesus told stories that are really hard to understand. They are called parables. Like all parables, the parable that we are going to hear today is a puzzle story for us to think about."

Some possible questions for review and warm-up may include but are not limited to:

"Does anyone take care of you in the way that the shepherd takes care of sheep? Who takes care of you? Who makes certain that you have food? Water? A place to rest? A place where you feel safe?"

¹ Cavalletti, Sofia. *The Religious Potential of the Child: The Description of an Experience with Children from Ages Three to Six*. Paulist Press, 1983.

2. Demonstrate taking the box or bag from its storage place. Again, show how to carry the container into the circle with care. Reflect a moment. Before opening the container this time, you may want to talk a bit more about the fact that the story you are going to tell is a parable. "You can't see what is in the bag now. Parables are like that, sometimes difficult to see. We need to think hard to open a parable so that we can find the meaning inside. Sometimes we have to look at parables in many different ways in order to understand why Jesus told such stories to people."

3. Open the container. In the case of a box, lift the lid slowly with an air of anticipation. Again, carefully take out the sheep, handing one sheep to each child with that child's name. Then, take out the rope sheep pen and ask the children to place their sheep in the pen. And finally, take out the now familiar felt pieces representing the green pasture and the blue, still water. Add the brown felt representing the rocky places. Smooth these on the floor or table at a distance from the sheep fold.

4. Read or tell the story of John 10:1-5 in your own words. The Good Shepherd story begins with the thief and robber who may be taken out of the container before you start to tell the story. (Some adults feel that the thief and robber will frighten children, although I have not found this to be the case. Rather, they seem fascinated.)

5. Wonder together. Some questions to follow this story may include: "Do you think the Good Shepherd's sheep are lucky? If you were one of these sheep,

how would you feel? Do you think Jesus was really talking about sheep when he told this story? Why do you think Jesus told people this puzzle story? What do you think he wanted people to understand? Do you think that the Good Shepherd is a man or a woman?"

6. Repeat the story. During the second telling, I usually have the thief and robber come up to the edge of the sheepfold, offering candy and other goodies to the sheep. Every once in a while, a sheep *will* jump the fence and join the thief and robber. I usually ask the children how the Good Shepherd feels when that happens.

7. Clean-up and art; or art, then clean-up.

8. Closing Gather in a circle for a quieting song or prayer before rejoining parents.

The Lost Sheep

The parable of the lost sheep, Luke 15:1-6, usually follows naturally from previous play experiences. Again, practice the story in advance and carefully introduce this new parable to the children. Some possible questions to ask with the lost sheep might include: "I wonder why the shepherd leaves so many sheep to look for one that is lost... I wonder why the shepherd doesn't just buy another sheep... I wonder if you have ever lost something special... I wonder how you would feel if you lost something you cared about..."

"Have you ever been lost? How did you feel? Who came to find you? How did you feel when you were found?"

The Christmas Story

Christmas Stories

Although I agree with Sofia Cavalletti that children don't need more Bible until they are around 10 or 11 years old, I just can't resist passing on my play version of the Christmas story. Family play or class use of simple, wooden figures may bring a new perspective to the Christmas season. With my wooden figures, Mary rides on the donkey. These story figures complete with carrying bag and small story book are available from Mary Snyder at: dutchhavenf38@gmail.com

Through playing the Christmas story together, you will be inviting children to explore their heritage. As they handle the figures and listen to the reading, all participants will have the freedom to hear and understand the story in their own ways. Individually or in a group, children may play with the materials over and over, finding something different to say each time.

Christmas Story Using Play Materials

1. Store the materials on a high shelf because they are to be used with care during special times. Once children have been introduced to the contents of the box or bag and have learned how to play through the stories, you may want to place the bag in a more accessible learning center or lower shelf.
2. Demonstrate taking the bag off the shelf. Show how to carry the bag with care. Sit down smoothly and put the closed bag in the middle of the circle or between you and your child. Reflect a moment. Lean forward toward the bag.
3. Get ready for the story. Before taking out the materials, talk a little bit about Christmas. Perhaps say, "Christmas is about the spirit of love that we can't see, that we cannot buy in stores. But we can feel it."

"At Christmas, we are thinking about the birth of a baby. We all have birth stories..." (Usually I ask listeners to tell

their own birth stories before they hear the story about the birth of Jesus.) Then I say, "now that we know that everyone has a birth story, we will hear one about Jesus."

4. Show children the bag. Start by talking about the contents of the bag with an air of mystery. Wonder what is in the new bag. Show your audience the picture on the side of the bag to identify the contents.

5. Tell the story of Luke 2:1-7 in your own words. I start by wondering what is inside this mysterious bag. Carefully, I reach in and take out the manger and put it down, saying, "I think that this is a manger that belongs in a town named Bethlehem. Here is Bethlehem" (as I point out an area on the carpet or table and place the manger there.) Then, I take out Joseph saying, "And here is Joseph who lives far away in Nazareth." I then take out Mary and place her next to Joseph explaining that Mary and

Joseph are engaged to be married, and that Mary is expecting a baby."

To illustrate the idea that Joseph must pay his taxes in Bethlehem, the home of his father's ancestors, I often ask the listeners to name where they would go to pay taxes in the hometown of their great, great grandfather.

And, I encourage conversation between Mary and Joseph. "What do you think that Mary said to Joseph before starting such a long journey? What do you think Joseph said to Mary?" Often children will say that Joseph offered Mary a donkey to ride. I then draw the donkey from the bag and gently place Mary on its back. I move the figures slowly from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Children watch the first time I tell the story and help move the figures during subsequent retellings of the same story.

If I am using the figures on a hard surface, I like to knock with the figure of Joseph, asking if there is room in the inn. The children often reply, "No, no room."

And, I always love the end of the story. After Mary and Joseph are settled in the stable area, I reach into the bag one last time saying, "And while they were there, the time came for Mary to be delivered. And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger."

I have given you some ideas regarding the way in which I tell the story. Be certain to practice telling the story "your way" before attempting this with children.

6. Retell the story. This time, give each figure to a child to hold and to move. Continue to work in a meditative manner.

7. Wonder together. Some wondering questions and comments that you might

use following the birth story include: "I wonder how long it took to walk from Nazareth to Bethlehem... I wonder if your parents had to go anywhere when you were born... Or, if you are adopted, I wonder if your parents needed to travel somewhere to find you..."

"It is very surprising that the baby in this story was born outside the inn. I wonder how Joseph and Mary felt when they were told that there was no room for them... Have you ever expected to be welcome someplace, then turned away? I wonder how you would feel if such a thing happened to you..."

"Do you think the baby Jesus was more special than other babies? I wonder how your parents felt when you arrived..."

(Please do NOT try to use all questions included here the first time you tell the story. Select different queries appropriate for your audience each time you return to the story.)

8. Repeat If the children want to do the story again, redistribute the figures. Ask an older child to tell the story this time if one is able to do so. Or, the children may want to play through the story in their own way, adding their own language, ideas, and insights.

Recognize that as children rework the story, a most important moment happens. "It is the time of the conversation with the Inner Teacher when the child reconsiders, without the adult, what has been presented and enters into its meaning."²

9. Art response: Whether in a religious education program or at home, invite

2 Cavalletti, Sofia. *The Religious Potential of the Child: The Description of an Experience with Children from Ages Three to Six*. Paulist Press, 1983.

children to work out parts of the story that are important to them. Perhaps say something like this: "Think about some work that you would like to do with this story. Here are paper, glue, cotton, and markers. What part of the story would you like to work on? How would you like to do your work?" As each individual tells you his/her idea, ask that child to move on and start working with art materials.

In addition to the birth story, the stories of the shepherds and wise men work particularly well with natural and scrap objects. Many children enjoy building their own stable complete with little bits of real hay (dried grass.) Our children spent many hours making "castles" for the three kings from oatmeal boxes and tubes "recycled" from paper towels. Be certain to include natural and "junk" in your art center.

10. Clean up: Lead the group in putting away materials. Replace figures carefully in the box or bag. Point out where this special bag will be kept. Now, store the materials in such a way that the children may return to them over and over again--physically, mentally, spiritually.

If during play, the Christmas figures become integrated with other toys such as blocks or a sand table, be certain that they are returned to their own bag. Always handle and care for the materials in such a way that demonstrates your sense that they are important.

11. Closing: Sing a carol or join hands for a moment of silent remembering.

The Shepherds

The story of the shepherds is found in Luke 2:8-20. Again, read the story as it

is written in the Bible and find your own way of telling it.

Adding the shepherds to the Christmas story requires more figures. Add angels, sheep and shepherds. You can make your own or purchase them. They may be stored in the same bag with Mary and Joseph or in a separate container.

Some wondering questions that might be used after presenting the shepherd story are: "I wonder how the shepherds kept watch. I wonder what they were doing or what they were thinking about when the angels came. How do you think they felt when they saw an angel? Have you ever seen an angel?"

"I'm not sure if I have seen an angel or not. Sometimes I have been with people who seemed like angels." Often at this point, children will say that they have seen angels on television. When they talk about the television angels, I ask what sets this person apart from others. And finally, "How do you think you would feel if you saw an angel like the shepherds did?"

The Wise Men

The third story associated with the birth of Jesus is that of the wise men, found in Matthew 2:1-15. Herod, the wise men and their camels may also be purchased or made. Some thoughts that might accompany the last story include: "I wonder if anyone came to see you when you were born... I wonder if they brought gifts... Do you still have any of these gifts? Why do you think people bring gifts to new born babies?"

"I wonder if you were in any danger when you were born? I wonder who protected you from harm when you were so tiny..."

For adults and older children: "Why do you think these beautiful stories are

included in the Bible? What do you think the author of Luke wanted us to understand? Why is Christmas celebrated today?"

"Whom do we ask when we want advice today? Whom does the President ask? Do we still have astrologers? What do you think is the difference between an astrologer and a spiritual guide?"

Closing Note

Be patient. Repetition is necessary. The children I taught used the Christmas material from September through Christmas...and then wondered why I wanted to do something else!

Resources

Godly Play: An Imaginative Approach to Religious Education by Jerome W. Berryman. Augsburg Press, 1991. Berryman lets the reader see the profound effects Godly Play has had on his life and that of his family.

Nurturing the Spirit in Non-sectarian Classrooms by Aline D. Wolf. Parent Child Press, 1996. Good philosophical overview. Although written for non-sectarian Montessori teachers, guidelines for using these sheep and shepherd stories are included.

Opening Doors to Quaker Religious Education compiled by Mary Snyder. Friends General Conference, 1999. Creating a sacred space for all ages in the Quaker tradition.

Teaching Godly Play: The Sunday Morning Handbook by Jerome W. Berryman. Abingdon Press. Excellent diagrams and ideas for designing class

situations that invite spiritual exploration and play.

Discovering Our Faith Through Worship Sharing. Compiled by Mary Snyder, this booklet features foundational quotes from the Bible, George Fox, Thich Nhat Hanh. Techniques remain the same—reading with responses in art, drama, writing, and/or discussion. Especially good for intergenerational groups and adults new to Friends. Includes helps in starting a family covenant group.

Faith & Play: Quaker Stories for Friends Trained in the Godly Play Method Quaker Press of Friends General Conference. It is hoped that you are trained in Godly Play first, picking up this booklet second.

Experiencing the Bible with Children by Dorothy Jean Furnish. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990. Excellent on "thinking responses" and "spontaneous feeling-and-acting" responses to biblical stories. There is also a fine section on child development and how the perceptions of children have changed since the reader was a child. The teacher chooses favorite stories.

Jesus, Who Was He? by Mary Snyder. Friends General Conference, 1991 This curriculum is very good for those who wish to put the quotes and stories of Jesus into historical context. It will work best if the meeting is doing inter-age worship sharing using *Discovering Our Faith Through Worship Sharing*. *Jesus, Who Was He?* is another excellent next step for those in 4th grade through high school as well as those adults who have not yet done Bible study. Drama and humor help those who have been wounded with past use of the Bible.