

CHAPTER III

CURRICULUM IDEAS

One way many small meetings have designed their curriculum is by organizing it around themes. Within the theme, each lesson must stand alone because attendance remains unpredictable. An ongoing art activity can provide continuity while solving the problem of frantically searching for materials each Saturday night. Some art activities are so successful that they last as long as the theme; others are shorter.

Many people are more willing to sign up as teachers if one or two coordinators have outlined the course for them. Other teachers prefer to design their own lessons within the chosen theme. Most, but not all, use the materials that have been gathered for them. Coordinators have the tough job of "being helpful" in the right amount for each teacher.

The ongoing activities given here are all open-ended. They are based upon the premise that children learn best when they can experiment, make choices, and reinterpret information by working it through their bodies. There is no "right" or "wrong" outcome. Yet, none of this is too messy for homes or rented space.

All of the projects are "mix and match". Each one is placed with the theme where it has been used successfully. You may prefer to team up a given project with a different theme. What works with one group of children is not necessarily successful with another.

None of these activities are "beneath" any age group including adults. However, you will have to adjust your teaching level to the children. See page Y-8 for developmental stages. Aim for the middle of your group. If you have more than one preschool child in regular attendance, start a younger group. You will pick up more.

It would be folly to order all the books listed under resources. Use as many as you need or can afford. We tried to suggest the best.

If you can, it would be wonderful to keep records of who attends First Day School, the lesson content, activities done, and their success or failure.

Teachers in Cobscooke, Maine, Monthly Meeting send home a letter to parents after each First Day School lesson. This is an excellent way to communicate and might be used in a modified form by others.

This chapter begins with a number of themes that the Eau Claire/Menomnie Meeting has used successfully. It concludes with additional curriculum resources. Most purchased curriculum not only can be adapted to the needs of your group, but also is a big help in organizing the sequence and content of your First Day School program.

Getting Acquainted With People In Meeting

Ask each person in meeting to share something of themselves with the children for one Sunday. Encourage people to sign up for one session and to bring pictures taken on trips, favorite songs and stories, crafts, careers, or hobbies. Children love the variety; adults feel comfortable teaching whatever they do or like best. Everyone becomes better acquainted.

Suggested Schedule

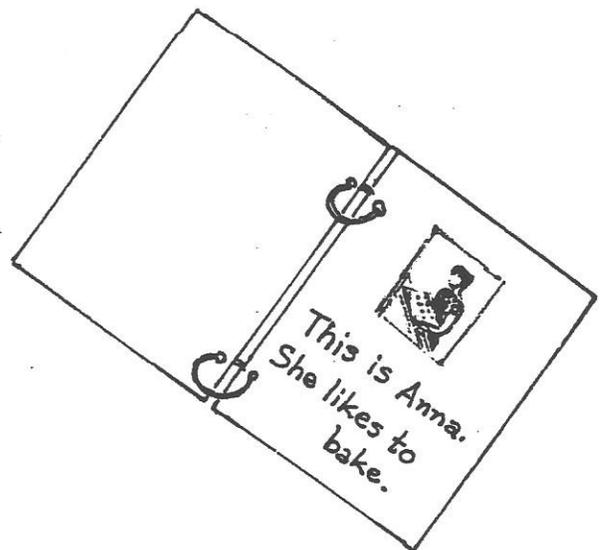
- 10 - 15 minutes Meeting for worship with adults
- 5 minutes Talk quietly with the children about thoughts and/or feelings which may have arisen during meeting for worship.
- 5 - 10 minutes Tell about yourself.
- 5 - 15 minutes Lead the children in a simple activity based on what you told them about yourself. Examples: playing a musical instrument, baking (perhaps the cut and bake kind of cookies), science experiments, gross point needle point.
- 5 minutes The ongoing activity: Ask the children to draw a picture of you. For early readers, write these words on the page: "This is _____. He (She) likes to _____. Place the picture in the child's file. These pictures will be assembled as a book at the end of the year.

Supplies In the Box

File folder for each child
Markers
Crayons
Pencils and/or pens
Paper

Variations

Some meetings have used this theme with older children only. The focus then is on the individual spiritual journey of each Friend.



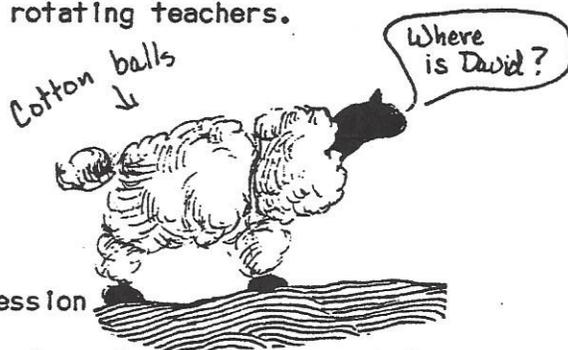
Old Testament Stories

Base the lesson for each week on one Old Testament story. (See "Ways to Tell a Story", page Y-6.) Start with the creation story on the first day. Begin the ongoing project by painting sky, water, and greenery on a very large sheet of paper. This will be the background for an ongoing mural. On each subsequent First Day, tell another story and have the children create pictures of Old Testament characters and animals. Make them interesting by using a variety of media. Cut out and rubber cement these creations onto the mural. Incorporate words to help define events and characters.

The coordinator may list stories from any children's Bible or Old Testament curriculum for a staff of rotating teachers.

Materials in the Box

Construction paper
Fabric and/or wallpaper scraps
Glitter
Cotton balls
Crayons
Rubber cement
Paint and brushes for the first session



Large paper for the mural background can be rolled separately.

Resources

Bible and Bible article, page Y-11

Genesis for Young Seekers by Elisabeth Farr. (Friends General Conference)

Great Stories of the Old Testament, Level 7 of the Fall Quarter, Living the Word, Joint Educational Development (JED).

Graphic Outline for Study of the Old Testament by Katherine B. Davis. (Friends General Conference, 1953)

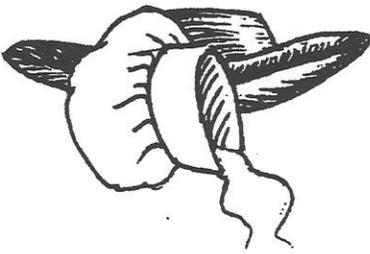
Ladder of Angels by Madeleine L'Engle. (Penguin Books, 1979) Children enjoy looking at pictures by other children. The text is quite abstract.

These Stones Will Shout by Mark Link. (Argus Communications)

Variations

Another activity that has worked well with the Old Testament theme is the creation of stream-of-consciousness books. Encourage the children to sketch and doodle many ideas while listening to the story. Next ask them to develop their ideas into cartoons, poetry, pictures, and/or original versions of the story. Encourage the selection of quotes to copy directly from the Bible. Each page may contain one idea or several in a number of forms. A discussion helps generate more ideas. Large (maybe 11"x15") pieces of good paper make this an attractive activity. Assemble pages as one book for each child at the end of the unit.

Act out Old Testament Stories. See "Creative Dramatics", page Y-7.



Friends

The lesson for each First Day is based on the life and contributions of one Friend. Many teachers volunteer to teach about a personal favorite. Children who have studied American history are most interested in early Friends in the colonies. However, this theme can certainly encompass modern Friends as well.

The theme can be done on a variety of levels from simple storytelling to an in-depth historical view. To help determine what is appropriate for your group, see the Janet Scott article on developmental stages, page Y-8.

Our teachers wrote key words, dates, and quotations on rolled out shelf paper as they talked about one Friend. This provided a simple record of what had been taught. The children returned to the shelf paper frequently in search of specific information for their projects.

Let the children select only one of the following ongoing activities if space is small and numbers are few. Or, if there is enough space, offer the young Friends a choice of activities each First Day.

Activity I - Mobiles

Ask each child to design a symbol for the "Friend of the day". You might begin by asking what they would particularly like to remember about this Friend. "What can you draw that would remind you of this?" The children then draw symbols on special plastic film with markers. When "shrunk" in the oven, the colors on the plastic will intensify.

Assemble mobiles on the last day of the theme.

Supplies in the Box

Plastic film (sometimes called "Shrinky Dinks" or "Shrink Art")
Felt tip markers

An oven is needed to shrink the plastic.
Alternate mobile materials may be used, e.g. precut posterboard pieces.

Activity II - Time Line

Draw a horizontal line through the center of a roll of shelf paper. Mark years on the line so that one foot equals ten years. Let each child choose an event in the life of the day's Friend or in the world at large to illustrate and add to the time line. Most groups put Quaker events across the top and other famous happenings along the bottom. Encourage quotes as well as illustrations. To prevent crowding, draw on precut paper and then rubber cement these drawings onto the time line. Have the children sign their work.

Materials In the Box

Roll of shelf paper with ten year segments marked on a horizontal line
Precut 4"x7 1/2" pieces of construction paper
Rubber cement
Felt tip markers, pencils, pens, and/or crayons



Activity III - Tablecloth

Create a Friendly tablecloth for potlucks. Ask the children to illustrate episodes from Friends' lives for the tablecloth. Children can draw directly on the cloth with permanent markers or use fabric crayons on paper which transfer onto the cloth by an Iron-on method. Complete instructions are on any fabric crayon box. The latter method prevents mistakes on the actual cloth and more flexibility in arranging the final design. A plain single bed sheet fits some large tables nicely. Come to think of it, is anyone interested in creating a Quaker bedsheet?

Materials In the Box

Fabric crayons, iron, and cloth
or
Permanent markers (both thin and wide) and cloth

Resources

A Faith to Live By by Elfrida Vipont. (Friends General Conference, 1962)

Lives That Speak. Living Light Curriculum. (Friends General Conference)

London to Philadelphia by Caroline C. Graveson. (The Banisdale Press, 1954)

Miniature Quaker Library. (Philadelphia Yearly Meeting)

A Procession of Friends by Daisy Newman. (Friends United Press, 1972)

The Story of George Fox by Rufus Jones. (Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1966)

William Penn, Elizabeth Fry, John Woolman. (Quaker Home Service, 1974)
Handy time lines are included in the first two.

Puppets And Parables

Children work on "generic" biblical puppets as they study a different parable each First Day. The children may wish to keep a log of stories to act out later or begin to enact stories as soon as their puppets are complete. If attendance is a problem, be sure to present the puppet show on the day it is finished. Don't wait until you have an entirely different group of puppeteers next week.

Resources

Bible and Bible article, page Y-11.

The Seventh Trumpet by Mark Link. (Argus Communications, 1978)

The Story of Jesus, Level 6 of the Fall quarter, odd years. Living the Word, Joint Educational Development (JED).

There are many ways to make puppets, of course. Here are some favorites:

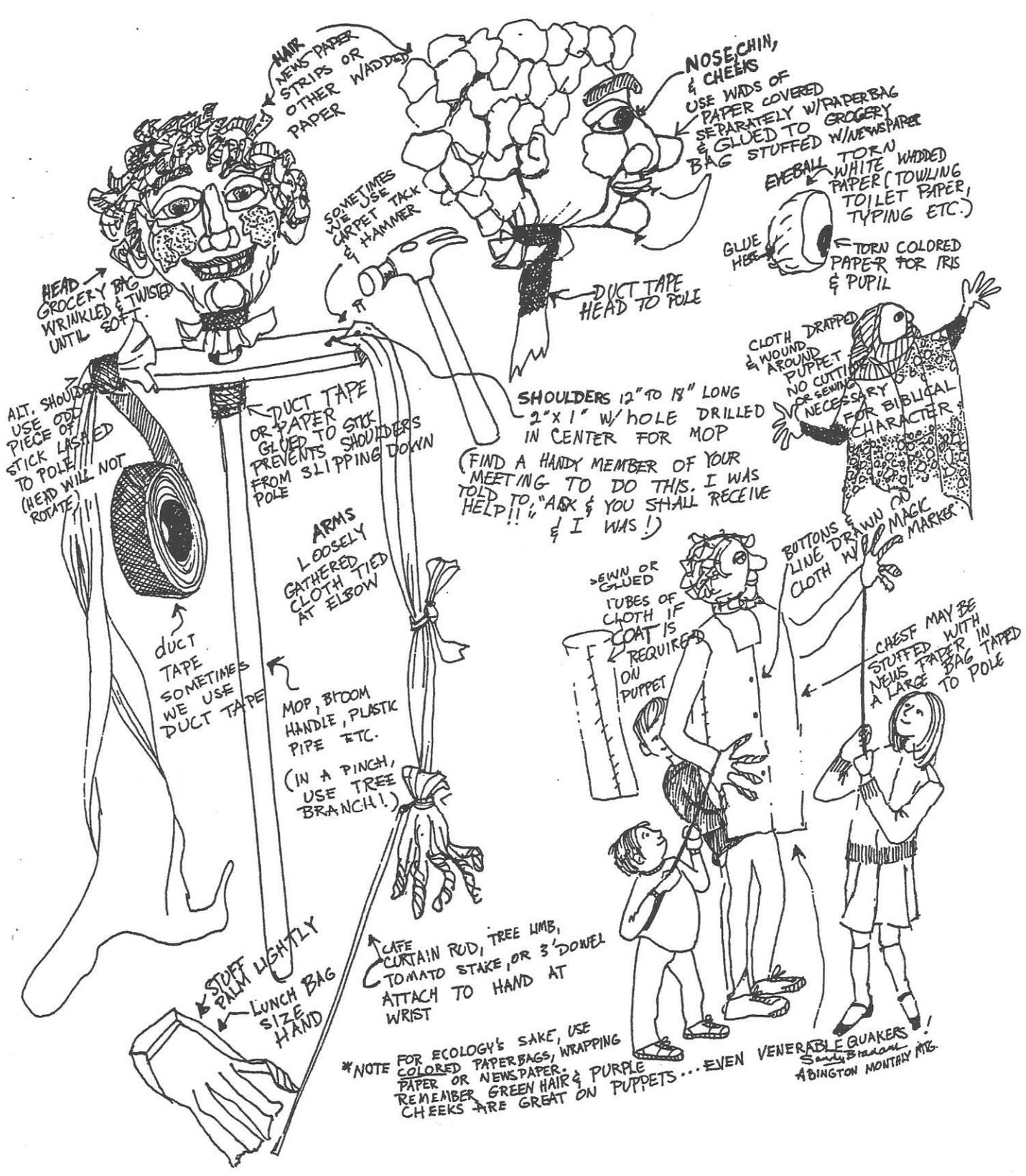
GIANT PUPPETS (for large spaces)

Supplies in the Boxes

Large, brown paper grocery bags
Lunch size brown paper bags
Newspaper
Poles (broom handles or plastic pipe)
Cross bars (2"x1" boards cut to 12" to 18" in length with a hole drilled in the center of each)
Rods (curtain rods or 3'dowels)
Tissue paper
Cloth--large pieces (old sheets and tablecloths)
Tape--masking or duct
Glue
Hammer and carpet tacks or staple gun

To Assemble Giant Puppets

1. Lash or tape crossbar to pole. (See illustration.) The crossbar will be the shoulders of the puppet.
2. Crumple a large grocery sack for the head. Crumpling will give the face a more skin-like texture. Turn grocery bag inside out to hide writing if necessary. Cut 2" off bottom of sack to make a rounder head.
3. Stuff grocery bag with soft balls of newspaper. Crumple one sheet at a time.



HAIR
NEWS PAPER
STRIPS OR
OTHER WADDLE
PAPER

NOSE CHIN,
& CHEEKS
USE WADS OF
PAPER COVERED
SEPARATELY W/PAPERBAG
& GLOUED TO
BAG STUFFED W/NEWSPAPER

EYEBALL
GLUE HERE
TORN WHITE WADDLED
PAPER (TOWLING
TOILET PAPER,
TYPING ETC.)
TORN COLORED
PAPER FOR IRIS
& PUPIL

HEAD
GROcery BAG
WRINKLED & TWISTED
UNTIL SOFT.

SOMETIMES
WE USE
CARPET TACK
& HAMMER

DUCT TAPE
HEAD TO POLE

ALT. SHOULDERS
USE ODD
PIECE OF
STICK LASHED
TO POLE
(HEAD WILL NOT
ROTATE)

DUCT TAPE
OR PAPER
GLOUED TO STICK
PREVENTS SHOULDERS
FROM SLIPPING DOWN
POLE

SHOULDERS 12" TO 18"
2" X 1" W/ HOLE DRILLED
IN CENTER FOR MOP

(FIND A HANDY MEMBER OF YOUR
MEETING TO DO THIS. I WAS
TOLD TO, "ASK & YOU SHALL RECEIVE
& I WAS!")

CLOTH DRAPPED
& WOUND
AROUND
PUPPET
NO CUTTING
OR SEWING
NECESSARY
FOR BIBLICAL
CHARACTER

ARMS
LOOSELY
GATHERED
CLOTH TIED
AT ELBOW

DUCT TAPE
SOMETIMES
WE USE
DUCT TAPE

MOP, BROOM
HANDLE, PLASTIC
PIPE ETC.
(IN A PINCH,
USE TREE
BRANCH!)

SEWN OR
GLOUED
TUBES OF
CLOTH IF
COAT IS
REQUIRED
ON
PUPPET

BUTTONS & WIN
LINE DRAWN ON
CLOTH W/

CHEST MAY BE
STUFFED WITH
NEWS PAPER IN
A LARGE
BAG TAPED
TO POLE

STUFF LIGHTLY
PALM BAG
SIZE HAND

USE
CURTAIN ROD, TREE LIMB,
TOMATO STAKE, OR 3' DOWEL
ATTACH TO HAND AT
WRIST

*NOTE FOR ECOLOGY'S SAKE, USE
COLORED PAPERBAGS, WRAPPING
PAPER OR NEWSPAPER.
REMEMBER GREEN HAIR & PURPLE
CHEEKS ARE GREAT ON PUPPETS... EVEN

VENERABLE QUAKERS
Sandy Bressant
ABINGTON MONTHLY ETC.

4. Mount the head on a pole. It is important that the pole go all the way to the top of the head to keep the head upright. Tape the "neck" of the sack to the pole.
5. Make all facial features stunningly three dimensional. The nose can be fashioned from an approximately 4"x8" piece of paper bag. Crumple and stuff with newspaper wads before gluing onto the face.
6. The whites of the eyes are large spitballs. Start with a piece of white paper about the size of a child's hand. Wad and spit a little. (Use some water if spit wads are offensive.) Glue down on the seamy side. Make each iris from a small piece of colored paper. Tiny print gift wrap adds effective texture to the iris.
7. Even the mouth and cheeks can be three dimensional. Try wadded tissue paper or colored paper sacks.
8. Crumple more newspaper for hair, eyebrows, and beards. At this point you should be giddy with creativity.
9. The hands are tricky, but outrageously artsy. Tear the open top ends of lunch sacks into ten strips going about half way down the bag. Twist these together, two at a time, to form five fingers. Rip out the base of the bag. Lightly stuff the hand with newspaper wads. Mount as illustrated.
10. Finish by draping cloth over the body. Tack or staple at shoulders.

These puppets have a way of taking on a life of their own. By now the children may see them as characters in one of the stories they have heard. It will take three children to cooperatively work one puppet. Use Creative Dramatics, page Y-7 to develop a play. Enjoy your show!

STICK PUPPETS (for small spaces)

Materials in the Box

Oak tag or file folders
 Markers or crayons
 Sticks (tongue depressors are excellent)
 Scissors
 Tape
 Maybe cloth scraps and glitter



Young children are particularly intrigued with a kind of puppet they can actually make. Draw on the oak tag or file folder and cut out the puppets. Mount on sticks with tape. Children have a tendency to draw too small. Encourage them to "think big". One way to do this is to ask them to make their pictures touch three sides of their piece of file folder. Add glitter and cloth decorations to puppets. (Use the lid of an ice cream bucket or a tray to catch extra glitter.)

Present a show for meeting over the back of a chair.

BLOCK HEAD PUPPETS

(hand puppets)

Materials In the Box

4"x8" blocks of high density styrofoam (2" wide insulation)

Roughly outlined pieces of styrofoam for nose and ears

White glue

Rasp

Knife with small blade

Markers and crayons

Index cards

Cloth pieces for clothing

Felt for hands

Scissors

Straight pins



Yarn

Needles and thread

Posterboard for props and scenery

To Make Puppets

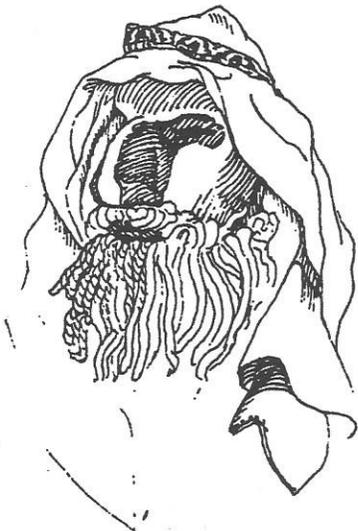
1. Glue on nose and ears. Smooth rough edges with a rasp or knife if desired.
2. Draw additional facial features directly on the styrofoam. Add yarn hair.
3. Cut down an index card to form a round tube the size of a child's "pointer" finger. Roll tube around his/her finger and tape. Dig out a hole in the base of the puppet's head so that the tube fits the hole. Glue tube into the hole.
4. Cut fabric and sew clothes. Attach felt hands to ends of sleeves.
5. Attach clothes to head with straight pins.

Variations

Highly sophisticated puppets can be made in this manner by carving and painting the styrofoam heads. Warning: carving styrofoam is very messy.

The "block heads" are extremely interesting by themselves and can stand alone with no body (a "sculpture") as the likeness of a biblical character, the artist, or anybody.

All of these floppy robed puppets make good biblical characters of any sort. The same resources work for stories about Jesus. You may wish to use The Prophetic Word by Moses Bailey (Friends General Conference, 1968) if you want to portray prophets.



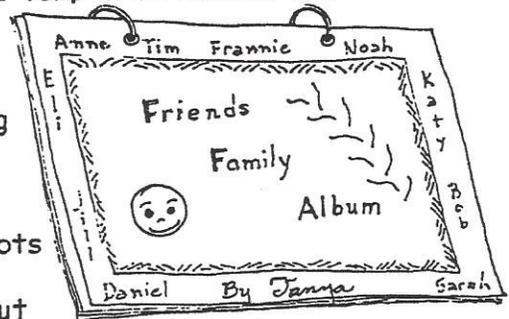
Short Term Projects

These projects are no less important than the others. They are just shorter.

1. Sock Puppets There are still more kinds of puppets. Deborah Poole of Nottingham Meeting reminds us that sock puppets are good for small children. Put your hand in an old tube sock and hold the toe between your thumb and fingers. This forms a mouth. Glue or sew bits of felt, cloth, yarn, old buttons, and so forth to appropriate places for eyes, tongue, nose, hair, etc. Keep your hand in the sock and bring the puppet to life.

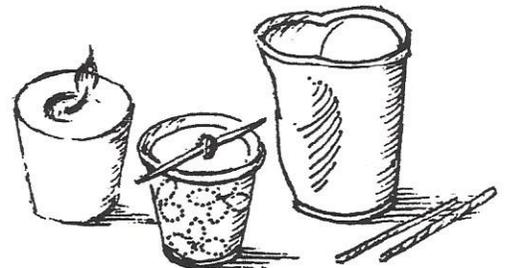
2. Shadow Puppets Deborah also writes that shadow puppets are both easy and dramatic. Use stick puppets. Shine a lamp from behind the puppets to cast a shadow on a white sheet hung from whatever is handy.

3. Friends Family Album Each child can bring photographs from home and do at least one page. Take pictures of Friends with no children. Encourage drawings, poetry, and words of explanation among the snapshots



4. Interview Adults Adults can be asked about any one of a myriad of things. The children of Prospect Hill Meeting, Minneapolis, gathered statistics which were not only included in the Friends Family Album but also on their Friends calendar. Children of other meetings have asked about prayer, what goes on during meeting for worship, preparation for worship, etc. It is important to work out questions with the children and to publish the results either in the meeting newsletter or in a publication of their own design.

5. Candle Making This activity naturally follows a discussion of the Inner Light. Candles made in small (say three ounce) paper cups are manageable. Purchase wick and wax. Melt wax in a can with a crimp on one side for easy pouring. The soft wick can be "hardened" by first dipping five inch strands in the liquid wax. Then fold the wick over a toothpick. Place it on the cup so that the wick is suspended into the cup while you pour the wax very carefully.



6. Tin Can Lanterns Fill cans with water and freeze solid. Give each child an ice filled can, a hammer, and a nail. Make designs in the can by punching holes with the nail. Use rugs or other material to deaden sound. When the ice has been removed, tap a nail through the bottom of the can to hold a votive candle in place. Coat hanger handles may be added. Use homemade candles and lanterns for special vigils or meetings for worship such as Christmas Eve. (Idea from Sally Farneth, Middletown Meeting in Langhorne, Pennsylvania)



Additional Curriculum Sources

When your meeting is ready for still more, consider the following:

*Consult the Friends General Conference catalogue for a complete list of Quaker curricula which continue to be available. You are invited to call the FGC office for a consultation to help determine the best for your situation. Many of the resources listed in this publication are available from FGC.

Friends General Conference (FGC)
1520-B Race Street
Philadelphia, PA 19102
(215) 241-7270

*Order The Friendly Seed from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. It is a two to three page idea sheet similar to the suggestions presented here. Biblical, service, and Quaker ideas are included. In addition you will receive the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Religious Education Newsletter.

To receive individual copies, about once a month, send \$5 to:

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (PYM)
Religious Education Committee
1515 Cherry Street
Philadelphia, PA 19102
(215) 241-7221

Past Friendly Seed collections may be ordered from FGC.

*Philadelphia Yearly Meeting has also produced several excellent planned lesson packets. These can be ordered from FGC.

*Another very valuable resource is the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Library. There is a \$10 charge per year for the individual, non-yearly meeting borrower...a bargain for anyone who gains access to so much. In many cases, you can make photocopies from borrowed out-of-print materials. Call or write:

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Library
1515 Cherry Street
Philadelphia, PA 19102
(215) 241-7220

*Children's Creative Response to Conflict offers fine resources--printed and/or people--in communication, cooperation, conflict-resolution and peace. For a brochure, write:

Children's Creative Response to Conflict (CCRC)
Box 271
Nyack, New York 10960

*Other planned, interdenominational curriculum can be a great help in organizing First Day School. Each weekly lesson gives the story or material to be presented to the children along with discussion questions and background information for adults. The curriculum is arranged in a logical sequence. We each, however, must bring our own Quaker perspective to materials from the "outside".

Some very good possibilities are:

Send for a catalogue from:

Joint Educational Development
Living The Word
Doing The Word
Youth Elect Series

Friends General Conference
(Currently under revision with Quaker input)

Interpreting The Word

Quaker Hill Bookstore
101 Quaker Hill Drive
Richmond, IN 47374

Knowing The Word (Childrens Bible Series)

American Baptist Church Educational Ministries
P.O. Box 851
Valley Forge, PA 19482

JOY

Winston Press
430 Oak Grove
Minneapolis, MN 55403

Centerquest

The Educational Center
6357 Clayton Road
St. Louis, MO 63117

Inexpensive activity books

American Bible Society
Box 5601
Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163

*The other traditional peace denominations publish material of interest to Friends.

Mennonite materials
(Many of these are written in conjunction with the Brethren.)

Congregational Literature Division
Mennonite Publishing House
Scottdale, PA 15683

*Some Friends have found Unitarian material helpful. Be prepared to add your own spiritual dimension. Order a Catalogue of Resources for Religious Education from:

Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) Distribution Center
25 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02108