



Expanding Your Child's Circle of Concern

Education, and Quaker religious education in particular, help us see beyond ourselves. We understand the truth of our lives more fully in a broader context. We see where we fit into the whole. Establishing a compassionate world-mindedness makes space for natural questions to arise about how we can best live together in our shared world.

Ward L. Kaiser, pastor, community organizer, and author of *How Maps Change Things: A Conversation About the Maps We Choose and the World We Want* concludes that there is a basic human tendency to put ourselves at the center of any map we create. To counterbalance this self-focus, he recommends we intentionally work to “enlarge the circles of our concern” beyond “our kind of people, our interests, our square meter of Earth.” This is faith formative work for Quakers because we believe that there is that of God in each person. The more we open ourselves to others, the more we open ourselves to the divine!

You can begin to gently expand your child's circle of concern in the early years by reading multi-cultural storybooks. Krista M. Aronson, Ph.D has created the [Diverse BookFinder](#), an invaluable resource for storybooks representing people who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). The website is much for than a searchable collection! The News and Views section has postings on research around racial identity, portrayals of economic hardship, dignity of essential work and more. There are also teaching tips on using [Visual Thinking Strategies](#) (VTS), a series of simple questions, to support exploration and reflection of the storybooks you read together.

For a virtual tour of families around the world, explore [Material World: A Global Family Portrait](#) by Peter Menzel. Photographers from around the world stayed with thirty families, who were average in wealth for their nation. At the end of the week-long stay, they photographed the family outside their home with all of their possessions! The disparity is jaw-dropping. The images open the way for conversations about simplicity, justice, and what matters most in life. As children grow, weave in films and short excursions, in age-appropriate ways, to increase cultural sensitivity. When your child is ready, participate in service projects where mutuality and respect set the tone. Build relationships across cultural divides in authentic ways, as you are able.

Putting our deepest convictions into action not only galvanizes the process of enlarging our circle of concern, but it sets off a faith formative dynamic. What we do really does change us inwardly. Aristotle advised people, to “become just by acting justly.” William James echoed that wisdom, “act as if” and it will become real, he wrote. Taking action, living our faith, engages this vital, transformative power. As love flows in the service of another, we, ourselves, are changed. When our children take action on their convictions, those values begin to become truly their own. They are coming to know themselves and their world in fuller ways and thus expanding the circle of their concern.

