



## Exploring Quakerism with Newcomers

by Suzanne Siverling, Lake Forest Meeting, Illinois Yearly Meeting

The future of our meetings, indeed the future of Quakerism, may be largely dependent upon our perceptions about and the manner in which we nurture our children and our newcomers. As a member of the FGC Religious Education Committee, I have been blessed over the past several years to visit numerous meetings and hear of their enthusiasm and energy for children's programs. Less clear to me is our energy for nurturing those who come to us as adult seekers.

For many years I have worked with the education and support of new attenders at my meeting in Lake Forest, Illinois. My understanding of their needs and of what works and what doesn't is ever-evolving and continues to mature as I learn from each group of seekers. Following are several things I have learned thus far.

Integrating new people into the fabric of our meetings involves more than greeting them warmly on Sunday morning or mailing them copies of our newsletters. We need to make a commitment to their nurture, spiritual development and integration into our community.

At a Gathering afternoon networking session a Friend asked how I get new attenders to commit to continued class attendance. It is my belief that it is not the newcomers' commitment but mine that makes the difference. The seekers have already demonstrated interest by coming to our meeting. How do we demonstrate our commitment to them—to our future?

One way is to have a class that is facilitated (not taught) by a leader or team

who demonstrate(s) Quakerism while exploring its nuances with the seekers. This program needs to continue throughout the school year, hence the commitment.

I have learned that it is important to meet at the convenience of all who plan to attend. My process for facilitating this begins at the rise of an early autumn meeting for worship with the announcement that a class for F/friends who are curious about Quakerism and interested in studying our values and beliefs will begin soon. Anyone interested in attending this newcomers' class is invited to meet with me in a specified corner of the meeting room for 5 minutes to explore scheduling. We then set up a class day and time that works for everyone concerned, including me. This concept is in stark contrast to choosing a time, announcing the class, and hoping people show up. Meeting first to determine the best time for the initial class demonstrates our commitment to be inclusive and meet the needs of the attenders. At each class, we set up or affirm the dates and times of two more classes—again, accommodating everyone's schedule.

The class usually follows a normal school year. We try to keep the sessions open and flexible, announcing the week before one is to be held what our topic will be and that the class is open for additional attenders. Sometimes they are held monthly, sometimes weekly or bi-weekly; flexibility is more important than maintaining a rigid schedule.

In our meeting, we use a curriculum written by Marsha Holliday called

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*Exploring Quakerism: A Study Guide*, which was produced through the FGC Religious Education Committee and is available at QuakerBooks of Friends General Conference.

One of the many things I like about the material we use is that it begins with the group's exploration of our experiences of God. We start by introducing ourselves and talking about our spiritual backgrounds and what led us to Quakers and to this meeting. I participate in this sharing. Usually, we discover that the class is a reflection of our community's diverse spiritual backgrounds, which I point out, adding any groups (such as "no formal religious upbringing") that may not have been mentioned during the introductions. We discuss chapter one and after that, we worship share about our individual experiences of

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God. This is important because the experience of God is foundational to Quakerism and it gives us an opportunity to learn about worship sharing by experience rather than discussion.

Because of the highly personal and confidential nature of these classes, I do not recommend having them at a time or in a place where other members of the meeting might casually walk in during the sharing.

I believe we need to spend more time assisting new attenders in their experiences of Quakerism and less time teaching concepts and history. For me, the latter is like inviting people to dinner and spending our time selecting a china

pattern while forgetting to cook the meal.

To that end, as we progress through our material, we spend time on open-ended questions. We explore what people like and what they do best. I listen to their concerns and help them unpack any baggage from negative faith-based experiences. Our task is to assist new attenders in integrating seamlessly into our meeting tapestry or, occasionally, to help them discern that Quakerism is not really their path. We cover the nuances of Quakerism (e.g., speaking only once in meeting for worship) as well as the local meeting's cultural etiquette and traditions (e.g., when the children join us for worship) and how to navigate the physical spiritual home

(e.g., learning the rules of the kitchen). We explore their gifts and for our last class I bring in members of the meeting's committees to discuss the work of the meeting.

Let's spend our time cooking a luscious feast of welcoming for those who are curious about who we are. Let's lead them home to Quakerism by focusing on them and their needs while drawing the map to guide them through Quaker culture and tradition. This is also the map that leads to our future. Let's travel it together in peace and love.

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An earlier version of this article appeared in the November 2005 issue of *Spark*, the New York Yearly Meeting newsletter.

## Dealing with Sporadic Attendance in First Day School

by Beth Collea, Wellesley Meeting, New England Yearly Meeting

The problem of sporadic attendance in First Day School is common to large and small meetings. The number of school, sports, and enrichment activities available to children has expanded leaving them exhausted or otherwise engaged on Sunday mornings. Religious Education Committees have to work hard to creatively find ways to thrive in spite of these cultural pressures.

To have a vibrant First Day School, we need to offer well-planned lessons, create opportunities for personal engagement, and work more explicitly at communicating with families and developing our sense of community. Here are some specific steps we've taken at Wellesley (MA) Monthly Meeting (NEYM) to connect more effectively with families and increase attendance.

- **Value attendance and say so.**

Martha Pott, our preschool teacher, sent a letter home and ended it by noting how the children's friendships had been growing so nicely and it was important to attend so that this continued to happen. The next week nine children attended, a good number for us!

- **Welcome Back Letter.** Every fall, let parents know what's in store for

the year, who will be teaching and which class will meet where. This is a great chance to reconnect with families who have been out of touch.

- **Weekly Family Update.** Rebecca Grunko, Cambridge Meeting (NEYM), originally encouraged us to try this and it is probably the easiest and most effective thing you can do to improve attendance. Send out a brief email summary of First Day School lessons for Sunday on the preceding Friday. The Family Update motivates families and helps parents overcome possible resistance from children or the simple inertia to stay home. It also reestablishes ties with the program for children who have been absent. As an added bonus, parents can ask questions after the lessons to spark follow-up conversations.
- **Opportunities for personal engagement** ("put everyone to work"). Give parents and/or children a reason they need to return the next week. Ask them to bring in something special like a food eaten in Jesus' time (for a snack) or to report on attempts to resolve conflicts in a new way during the week. If people are involved, they are committed.

- **Plan special events.** We offer two weeks of Worshipping Skills in the fall and the spring. Seasoned Friends meet with the children and talk about how they center, have experienced leadings in their lives, deal with distractions in worship, etc. These are high attendance weeks and even children in two-faith families make an effort to attend.
- **Build Community.** Plan events at different times and include offerings to help the whole family enjoy a Quaker activity together. Try a family movie night, a field trip, or service project. We host a Parents' Night Out every fall for parents of at least one child six years old or younger. The parents enjoy a potluck dinner in a nearby home and the young children have a companion dinner party at the meetinghouse. When the young parents develop friendships, they have another reason to get to meeting on Sunday morning.

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This article previously appeared in the February 12, 2005, issue of *REmail*, the electronic religious education newsletter of New England Yearly Meeting.

# Quaker Take-Out: Bridging the FDS Absentee Gap

by Beth Collea, Wellesley Meeting, New England Yearly Meeting

A growing tension exists between our Quaker families and our culture of busy-ness and 'round the clock scheduling. Caught between school sports and all of other choices that now exist on Sunday mornings, Quaker families often don't prioritize meeting attendance.

Needless to say, this is very discouraging for First Day School teachers who have worked hard to prepare a lesson.

Irregular attendance also inhibits the formation of friendships among class members and the development of a sense of community. The more creative we can be as First Day School teachers about maintaining a connection with our families, the more successful we'll be in our work to raise up the next generation of Quakers.

At Wellesley (MA) Meeting (NEYM), we've started playing with an idea we're calling "Quaker Take-Out: First Day School Do-At-Home Activities." It gives us a way to keep the Quaker connection going during multi-week gaps in attendance and as an added bonus it allows us to extend lessons beyond Sunday morning. We start with a Chinese food take-out container. You can purchase these on-line or at a party store. Any interesting small box or hand-folded container will work. For the take-out activity, try a simple fill-in-the-blank game to play at home. Our lower elementary teacher, Martha Pott, was teaching about George Fox and equality. She created a game so simple that a family can play it in the car! Take turns filling in the blank, "Even though some people \_\_\_\_\_, we're all the same under our skin." Start families out with a completed example. Martha used,

"Even though some people are fast readers and some people are slow readers, we're all the same under our skin." She included a set of small stickers for children to decorate the take-out box every time they came up with an answer.

The possibilities are endless. If you work on short periods of silent worship with kids (we call this "Listening in the Light") you could create a Quaker Take-Out with a votive candle and some directions about starting family worship with just 30 seconds of silence for 3 to 4-year-olds and gradually increasing the time to a couple of minutes. Other ideas include: a guided meditation on the 23rd Psalm or the mind-in-a-jar activity from *Peaceful Piggy Meditation*, by Kerry Lee Maclean (Albert Whitman, 2006). For this one, include a small jar with a screw-on lid and some sand. Give directions to add sand and water to the jar and shake it. The sand is like thoughts that swirl around and cloud our minds. This is a lovely illustration of how becoming still can clear and open our minds. Try reading *Kindness Quilt*, by Nancy Elizabeth Wallace (Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 2006), in First Day School. (This book is appropriate for grades K thru 2.) In the Quaker Take-Out, send home nine squares of colored paper. Have the family think of kind acts they can perform and write one on each square and put them together to make a quilt pattern. I wouldn't send Quaker Take-Out home more than about once a month to keep the idea fun and fresh.

Quaker Take-Out opens avenues of connection during times when a child is

going to miss several consecutive weeks. Invite participation any way you can! Put a special letter to the child in the box with directions for participating in a service project that the class will be undertaking. It could be an ingathering of food at Thanksgiving, a shoe box of toiletries for a prison ministry at Christmas, or a class' decision to do extra chores at home to raise money for a relief effort. If you can find a Quaker theme that is illustrated through the passion that is occasioning the absence, so much the better. For baseball season, suggest children read *Let Them Play*, by Margot Theis Raven and Chris Ellison (Sleeping Bear Press, 2005). This picture book (grades 2-5) is about the all-Black little league team from South Carolina that traveled to Williamsport, PA in 1955 but was barred from playing in the World Series.

Often older children feel awkward about returning to meeting after a long absence. Anything you can do to clue them in and help them stay engaged will smooth the re-entry to First Day School. There is a wonderful secondary benefit of more actively linking the First Day School and the home. Through all of this, parents may come to value more highly their vital role in the faith formation of their children.

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This article previously appeared in the November 11, 2006, issue of *REmail*, the electronic religious education newsletter of New England Yearly Meeting.

All previous issues of **FGC Resource** and its predecessor, *Religious Education Newsletter*, are archived on the FGC website at [www.fgcquaker.org/library/teachingresources/](http://www.fgcquaker.org/library/teachingresources/).

# The Necessary, Amazing Power of Story

by Michael Gibson, Woodbury Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

Story is how we share who we are with those we love the most. We tell and listen to stories of the ordinary and the extraordinary. We delight in stories of cherished moments. We record and catalog them in words and photographs. People of all ages hunger for stories. We may ask, “What did you do at school today,” or “how was the wedding,” or “what did you do on your vacation?” Families that tell their stories are blest. The family with a rich store of tales going back many years is truly fortunate. As creatures who live in time and space, we cannot avoid story; our lives *are* stories, and they are wonderful ones. Through telling our stories we relive past experiences, remember emotions, and discover and reinforce the substance of our lives. Through story we find and articulate who we are.

The further we move away from our trusted inner circle of family and friends, the more we are inclined to say who we are through facts, figures and concepts. We may resort to the inaccurate, but convenient, simplicity of labels. When we tell our stories to those close to us, the same objective facts and figures may be present, but they are parts of the narrative, not disconnected data. Sometimes they are implied or embedded in the stories and are not expressly stated. Like the knots at the back of some types of needlework, they reveal the path, or process, but are not the picture itself. Young children have not yet divorced story from who they are, and their circles are not as rigidly drawn as those of adults, so they delight us with their openness in telling their stories in all kinds of settings. Children may remind us of our own *need* for story.

Within our most intimate circles, our lives speak in such a way that we ourselves become the narrative that our loved ones read. At the outer edges of circles, we may attempt to let little pieces of the data of our lives speak. It is easy to forget that our lives always speak and, in fact, may communicate just as much as what we say about ourselves, and sometimes much more powerfully. When we

do not know a person’s story, we might create a narrative of sorts based on our observations. This is tricky business and can get us in trouble. We may have little to go on but an open smile, a smirk, a nervous habit, a gait, or an inner feeling of warmth or coldness when we are around that person. To understand others we seem to rely on story. This may be because on some level we know that our own stories define us, shape us, comfort and challenge us, and propel us forward.

Within communities of faith, we share Spirit stories with those we may barely know, and the narratives everyone in the group shares constitute much of the glue that bonds all together. We share stories of the Bible, ancient stories that we identify with, stories of other people in which we discover our own individual and corporate narratives. We share stories of our history as Friends. But the story is not a completed text. Our corporate life together is our common story, and each person is a part of its unfolding. God speaks to us in and through the narrative of our worship, learning, sharing and playing together, and through the records of our acts of love and service that give our relating meaning. Our corporate stories express our deepest joys and dreams, and our deepest sorrows, as well. Our co-creating and co-telling of stories help to give us our corporate identity and strengthen our connections. We may act out our stories, or sing them, create images of them, even dance them. We need to tell and hear our corporate Spirit stories in order to make sense of our own individual ones. Stories weave the fabric of our lives.

While our stories are always present for us, our deepest stories do not unfold to us without our effort. Sue Monk Kidd speaks with eloquence and insight about this in her book, *Firstlight: The Early Inspirational Writings* (Penguin Books, 2006, p. 21).

God, the sublime storyteller, calls us into the passion of telling our tale. But creating personal spiritual stories is an act of soul-

making that does not happen automatically. It comes only as we risk stepping into the chaos of our lives and naming the angels that inhabit the shadows. It comes as we give expression to our struggle for individual meaning, identity, and truth, as we wrestle with the angels, both light and dark, and celebrate the places where God stirs. In the crucible of story we become artists of meaning. There we meet God most surely.

I believe that what Sue Monk Kidd says of personal spiritual stories is also true of our communal Spirit stories. Ultimately we all, both as individuals and as communities of faith, are not what we believe or what we do, but who we are—and our lives are played out in endless song and continuous story. Our stories not only guide, shape, heal and inspire, but give voice to what cannot otherwise be expressed yet must be communicated. Through heart-filled storytelling we find our place in God’s story.

In our families and communities of faith, we do well to create, with intention and care, creative safe spaces to discover and tell our stories to one another. One of the best gifts we can offer those we love is the treasure of undivided attention, for we all need to tell our stories and be listened to. And as communities of faith we can uncover and share our corporate narratives, whether ancient or newly written, for story is essential to who we are. What are the stories that have helped to shape us as a people of faith? Are we careful to keep passing them on? What are the stories we tell, or might tell, about who we have been as Friends? What can we say about who we are becoming? What are our visions, our dreams, our hopes? What are the stories the Spirit is writing in our hearts, in our meeting communities, in our religious society? Discover, or rediscover again and again, the power of story to shape and nurture persons and communities, and the power of story to bring us face to face with God. Be holy storytellers and holy listeners, and enjoy the various levels of story that you are.

So, where do we begin? There are numerous ways to tell our stories within monthly meetings and as meeting communities. Here are but a few possibilities. Please note that many of these can and should be done multigenerationally.

- Corporately write and perform a play or puppet play about your meeting's history, a Bible story, the story of a historic Friend or deceased or living member of your meeting, or a major project your meeting community took on.
- Create a meeting timeline and display it on a long wall. Invite members and attenders to put sticky notes on it marking when they started coming to meeting and adding any kind of remembrance (particular food at a potluck, something that happened in worship, something fun that happened in the meeting, an underlying tension that was a part of some problem when they first came to the meeting, etc.) Use notes, photos or drawings.
- Have a table or two loaded with more random objects than there are participants (a pinecone, spoon, hammer, telephone receiver, pencil, toy,

measuring tape, etc.). Invite people to come to the table one at a time to pick out something that represents something or someone they are grateful for in the meeting, then place that object in a large pot or box on another table, naming what it is they are thankful for. The whole group can hold in the Light each person as he or she approaches the object table. Having either a clear acrylic receptacle for the selected articles or a container made for this purpose by meeting children would be excellent. Stories are welcome!

- Create a tapestry, quilt, display or collage that tells a story you wish to remember, or that documents an event in the life of the meeting.
- Working as a group, write and then sing a song that tells a story about the meeting. Perform it for others within the meeting community.
- Put song, art, photography, poetry, dance and drama together to create a multi-media expression of a treasured narrative or that celebrates the life of someone in the meeting.
- Provide worship sharing opportunities that focus on journeys.

- Create a monthly meeting scrapbook documenting people and events.
- Corporately create a loose-leaf meeting book on a given theme, with contributions coming from members and attenders of all ages employing the written word, paintings, photographs, graphics, etc.
- Corporately create a sculpture of part of your corporate journey, or of your meeting's vision of the future.
- Study story-telling techniques and share stories within your meeting.
- The community can help cover the expenses of Godly Play® training for one or two adult meeting members who can then tell stories and facilitate everyone wondering together about them.
- Have a meeting-wide gathering for story, where people of all ages are invited to share a story and listen to the stories of others.
- Encourage and provide tools to facilitate regular times for family story sharing in the home.
- Working together, create a diorama, a parade float, a video or a story garden. Use your imagination!

## Telling Stories by Heart for First Day School

by Gail Eastwood, Humboldt (CA) Meeting and Karen Davidson Olson, Grass Valley (CA) Meeting, Pacific Yearly Meeting

### Stories Take Us Deeper

Many years ago in Africa, storytellers traveled from village to village sharing myths, gossip, and lessons with the people. Together, they laughed and cried and shared their bond of humanity. Then television came to the region. The television started telling the same stories as the tellers. However, the stories on the television were embellished with magnificent special effects and beautiful or handsome narrators. The people turned to the stories on television. First the young adults, attracted to the hip young narrators, switched to television. Then the young children and finally their parents abandoned the traveling tellers for the television, which presented stories quicker and slicker. The storytellers kept

telling the tales from village to village although their audiences became smaller and smaller and older and older.

After a year this began to change. More and more people came back to the storytellers to patiently listen as the stories unfolded. In six months the audience was larger than ever. A storyteller asked a teenager, "Why did you come back? The television tells the same stories with fancy effects. Why did you return?" The girl spoke the feelings of all the gathered people when she replied, "The television people know the stories, but the storyteller knows me."

We tell stories to each other because that is how we empathize with one another. Whether it is around the well or the water cooler, people through the

ages share themselves when they share their stories. Stories can help people of different generations share with each other. Stories can teach gently, but the learning is lasting.

Dr. Joseph Chilton Pearce, a scientist who studies the activity in the brain, particularly when we learn, said that within the brain there is a river of energy that connects the reptilian brain (sensory) with the mammalian brain (analysis and creativity). This limbic system (sensory) is exercised by the use of our imagination. The more we use it, the more fluid and deeper our connections go. When adults or children create images in their mind as the storyteller tells the story, they are using the limbic system, which

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makes lasting connections in the brain. Albert Einstein said, "If you want your children to be brilliant, tell them fairytales. If you want them to be more brilliant, tell them more fairytales."

Stories also connect the head with the heart. Jesus knew this. When he shared sacred truths that he knew would be hard to hear, he used stories. He helped people hear from their hearts. So when the apostles wanted to know about forgiveness, he told the story of The Prodigal Son. The story shows how love can forgive before the son repents. Trying to reach the Pharisees, Jesus reflected their disconnectedness from God's love in the story of the farmer who left his fields to his servants. When he sent his son to collect the harvest, the servants killed the son. Some stories reach the heart better than others.

### Karen's Hints for Telling Stories in First Day School

Storytelling can be scary. It's hard to let go of the book. Here are some suggestions that can help you feel more confident in learning and telling a story.

1. Find a story that excites you or touches your heart. You have to read many stories to find the right one. Your personal experience stories are usually the most powerful.
2. Learn the story by heart, not by memory. Sometimes you might want to memorize a phrase: "Run, run as fast as you can. You can't catch me, I'm the Gingerbread Man."
3. If you are learning a story by heart from a book, read it three times

and then close the book. If you are doing a story from memory, write it down and read it three times and put it away.

4. Now see the story in your mind's eye. Visualize the characters. What does Goldilocks look like? What does the Bears' home look like? Is it a rock structure or a wooden house? What is Goldilocks feeling as she goes into their house? Go through the story in this manner. Notice you haven't spoken any words yet.
5. Now think about the bare outline of the story. If there are any details (place, names, dates, etc.) that you have forgotten, go back to the original written story. You will probably be shocked by how vivid the story is now.
6. Put the visualizations and the story together. Give voice to the characters. (This is my favorite part. I like to do it in front of the mirror.)
7. Tell the story OUT LOUD to yourself. The words are different inside your head. You need to hear them. (The shower can be a good place for this.)
8. Tell it to someone. Before you go to First Day School the story needs to be told. Anyone will do—your mother, the coffee vender, your dog. Just tell it.
9. Share it with your children. Sometimes I set the stage by lighting a candle or singing a song. The most important aspect is for you, the storyteller, to be excited.
10. This sounds like a lot of work, but when you see your most restless

child sitting transfixed in the spell of the story, it will be worth it. But be prepared for the first words to be "tell us another!" It's always good to have two stories ready.

11. Trust the power of telling and enjoy.

### Karen's Favorite Story Resources

Religious Education Committee of FGC, *Quakers on the Move*. 1996.

White, William R. *Stories for Telling*. Augsburg Publishing House. 1986.

Ragan, Kathleen. *Fearless Girls, Wise Women & Beloved Sisters*. W.W. Norton & Co. 2000.

White, William R. *Speaking In Stories: Resource for Christian Storytellers*. Augsburg Publishing House. 1982.

Komroff, Manuel, trans. *The Great Fables of All Nations*. Tudor Publishing Company. 1935.

Shah, Idreis. *The Magic Monastery*. E.P. Dutton & Co.

Uchida. *The Magic Listening Cap: Folktales from Japan*. Harcourt Brace and World. 1955.

Mayo, Gretchen Will. *Earthmaker Tales*. Walker Publishing. 1991.

To purchase any of these or to get ideas for more story resource ideas, go to <http://www.quakerbooks.org>, the website of QuakerBooks of Friends General Conference. Look at the adult books as well as the children's books; so many of the stories we need to share and sink deeper into are the same for people of all ages.

This article first appeared in the April 2007 edition of *Friends Bulletin* (No. 17) and is reprinted with kind permission.

## News & Views

### Two Exciting RE Events for You in 2008

#### Building and Holding Safe Spaces for Quaker Youth, February 8–10, 2007, at Pendle Hill

This event is jointly sponsored by FGC's Youth Ministries and Religious Education Committees and Pendle Hill and will be a great opportunity to explore safety issues for overnight events for middle and high school-aged Friends. See the full flyer sent to your monthly meeting. Registration is being handled by Pendle Hill. For more information, call 800-742-3150 ext 3 or visit the Pendle Hill website at [http://pendlehill.org/programs/courses\\_workshops\\_retreats.php](http://pendlehill.org/programs/courses_workshops_retreats.php)

## The 2008 Religious Educators Institute: Out of the Living Silence, August 14–17, 2008, at Bradford Woods, near Indianapolis, Indiana

Please see the ad for this event in this issue of FGC REsource. If you are a parent or you have any interest in Friends religious education, start making your plans now! See you there.

## Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Curricula—now on-line!

Many of our favorite curricula are now available for free! Thank you PYM! Use this link, <http://www.pym.org/education/capsules/content.htm> to see the current listings. Their plan is to continue making more and more of their materials available on-line.

## Free Bibles for Quakers!

The Bible Association of Friends in America, established about 175 years ago, is pleased to supply Friends with copies of the Bible for free. You can select the translation of your choice. Basic Bibles are absolutely free! If you want something more elaborate like a HarperCollins or Oxford study Bible, the Bible Association will pass along their 40% discount to you and you will need to cover the remaining 60%, still a fabulous offer. Please make your request in writing, identifying your monthly meeting or other affiliation, to the following address.

Bible Association of Friends in America, Box #3, Riverton, NJ 08077

Charlotte Lippincott is the Friend who will be handling the requests and you may call her at 609-267-1736 with questions.

## FGC Religious Education Coordinator recommends:

*Exploring Faith Questions: Journeys of Spirituality and Discovery*, by Anne Martin, United Church Publishing House, Toronto, Canada, 2004. 168 pages.

This curriculum for adults of any age provides resources for 13 two hour sessions, including aids for the facilitator. It may be used for 13 consecutive weeks or for two groups of six or seven sessions. While written for the United Church of Canada, a liberal Protestant body, it is open-ended and non-dogmatic, and makes generous use of silence, prayer and spiritual sharing, making it particularly Quaker friendly. This resource offers opportunities for newcomers and life-long members to engage in faith reflection in small group settings on 13 central faith questions, such as

*How do you experience God in your life?*

*Prayer: What does it mean to you?*

*Forgiveness: What are the challenges and the blessings?*

*How do you live your faith in the world?*

The format is very simple and easy to use. The materials for each session include short quotes speaking to the question. What it needs to make it ideal for Quakers are the addition of a couple of quotes from Quaker authors for each session, a separate session on Friends meeting for worship and opportunities to reflect on the testimonies. Adding Quaker quotes would be easy enough to do, thanks to numerous editions of yearly meeting Faith and Practice. Even without these additions the resource could be a rich resource for your monthly meeting or spiritual sharing group. You may order this resource from QuakerBooks of FGC by calling 800-966-4556 or visiting [www.QuakerBooks.org](http://www.QuakerBooks.org).

— Michael Gibson

## Two Quaker Websites Worth Exploring

### KidsQuake

Check out *KidsQuake*, a youth outreach project of Southern Quarter in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. It is informative, fun, and child-friendly.

<http://www.friendsmedia.org/kidsquake/index.php>

### Children's Religious Education & Spiritual Life Website

Be sure to go to the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's excellent Children's Religious Education & Spiritual Life Website for articles, pamphlets, curricula, booklists, newsletters and web links, plus lots of other wonderful resources.

<http://www.pym.org/education/children>

# Building and Holding Safe Spaces for Quaker Youth

February 8–10, 2008 / Pendle Hill

FGC's Youth Ministries and Religious Education Committees are co-sponsoring a workshop on safety issues for overnight events for middle and high school-aged Friends. At this workshop, Friends will have opportunities to



- seek common ground on issues relating to guidelines and program expectations
- explore how to empower and support youth as they help to shape their own guidelines
- look at case studies together
- share stories, ideas, and resources
- look at what yearly meetings have put together around issues of safety for youth
- worship together and support one another in ministry

Kri Burkander, of Ann Arbor Friends (MI) Meeting in Lake Erie Yearly Meeting, will facilitate. Presenters will include youth workers Lisa Graustein, New England Yearly Meeting; Elizabeth Walmsley and Cookie Caldwell, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting; and Laura Norlin, Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association.

Registration handled by Pendle Hill. For more information call 800-742-3150 ext 3. or visit the Pendle Hill website at [http://pendlehill.org/programs/courses\\_workshops\\_retreats.php](http://pendlehill.org/programs/courses_workshops_retreats.php)

Matching funds may be available from Pendle Hill. Call John Meyer at Pendle Hill, ext. 121, to apply.

an offering of Pendle Hill

and the Religious Education and Youth Ministries Committees of FGC



## FGC Friends General Conference PRESENTS 2008 Religious Educators Institute

# Out of the Living Silence

*a dynamic conference for religious educators, parents and other adults*

Bradford Woods, near Indianapolis, Indiana • August 14–17, 2008



**What is REI 08???** It is the **Religious Educators Institute**, a conference of Friends General Conference. It is immersion workshops, interest groups, multigenerational activities, worship, and engaging conversations. It is laughter, new friends, insight, and inspiration. It is four days of learning and sharing about how we nurture one another, children and adults, in the meeting community and in the home. It is a conference that can benefit everyone in your monthly meeting.

**How much does it cost???** Approximately \$250 to \$300 for adults. Final fees will be available in March of 2008.

**Who should come???** Parents, adults and young adults of meetings across the USA and Canada will find this conference exciting and rewarding. For First Day School teachers, helpers, coordinators, and adult program leaders this conference is a must! A program (3 years of age thru 6th grade) will be offered for those participants who opt to bring their children.

*The REI only comes around every four years, so don't miss out on this event!  
Mark your calendars and be on the lookout for more news about this important conference.*

For more information, please contact Michael Gibson, FGC Religious Education Coordinator, at [MichaelG@fgcquaker.org](mailto:MichaelG@fgcquaker.org) or 215-561-1700. Look for postings in early spring of 2008 at [www.fgcquaker.org](http://www.fgcquaker.org)

The FGC Religious Education Committee invites your feedback. Please let us know what we are doing right and what needs improvement. We would also like to hear your stories, what is happening in religious education in your meeting, and what topics you would like us to address.

Submissions should be between 100 and 1500 words in length and may be submitted to the co-editors by regular mail to: Michael Gibson, Religious Education Coordinator, Friends General Conference, 1216 Arch Street, 2B, Philadelphia, PA 19107; or by email to: [michaelg@fgcquaker.org](mailto:michaelg@fgcquaker.org). The co-editors of **FGC Resource** reserve the right to make final editing and determine if and when articles will be printed.

**Co-editors Suzanne Siverling and Michael Gibson**

## FGC Resource



**Suzanne Siverling and Michael Gibson, co-editors**

**Send any comments, questions or monthly meeting RE news to:**

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