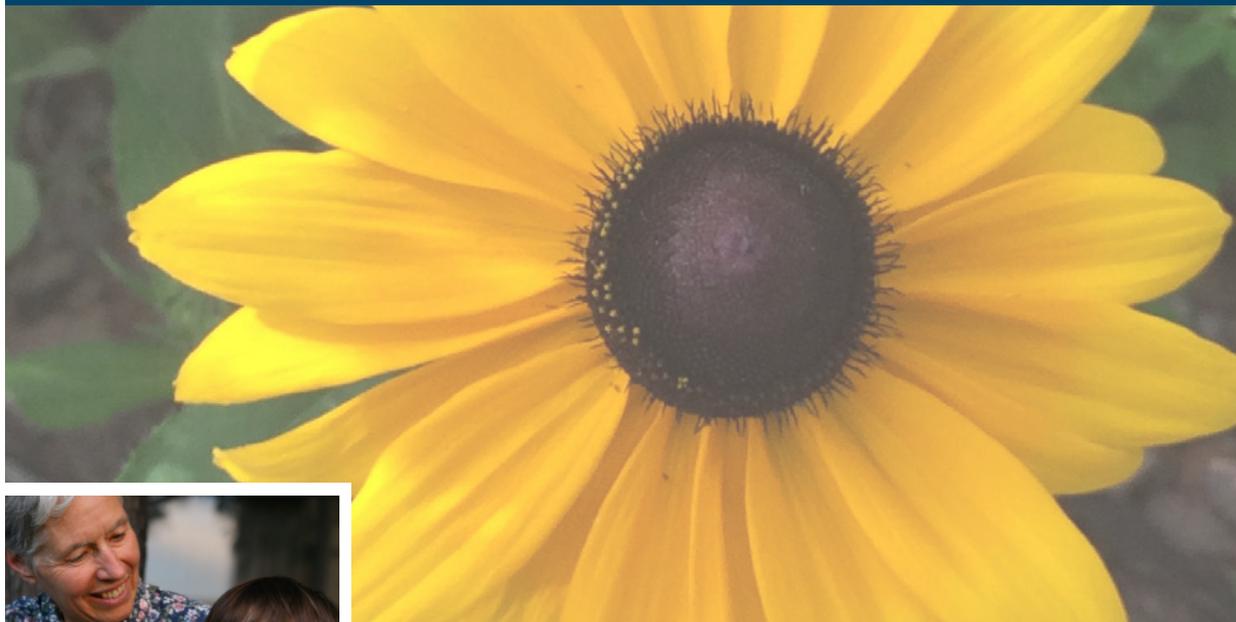


Spiritual Deepening for Children



Meeting together in a small group over 8-12 sessions, Spiritual Deepening program participants will explore Quaker thought, share and listen to each other's spiritual stories, and practice new ways of connecting to Spirit.

Using Picture Books for Spiritual Deepening with Children (and Adults!)

Many of the Spiritual Deepening activities for children are much more than reading a book to children and wondering about it together. These exercises involve building the circle of children and adult(s), sharing about their lives (plusses and minuses or “roses and thorns”), centering together through song and/or breathing, sharing and wondering about a book together, doing an activity to respond and reflect on the book, and closing the time together.

Book may be presented in one lesson or presented in multiple lessons. Young children, especially, may need to have a story presented over several sessions. Teachers could repeat reading the book and asking wondering questions at each presentation and then move through the various activities over the course of more than one week. Young children love repetition and revisiting books and materials. It gives them a sense of what the book or activity is about and helps them feel some control over the concepts they are learning.

Using Wondering Questions with Children and Adults

Questions that begin with “I wonder. . .” give us opportunities to reflect upon a story, how it relates to us and our lives, and to the presence of the Spirit. Learning to listen and reflect with awe and openness to continue revelation is part of our Quaker practice, and for children can begin with their experience of stories.

Wondering questions are appropriate for all ages, as well as being:

- open-ended; open to multiple interpretations or meanings
- avenues to feelings and not just recall of facts or “the moral of the story”
- helpful in bringing the story to the life of the child (“I wonder where you are in the story?”)
- experiential, not dogmatic
- helpful in allowing the adult to be authentic in wondering how a story affects a child instead of wanting to know what the child remembers

It is not only the questions that open listeners to discovery; it is how the questions are asked and how they are responded to. By listening respectfully to every response given and by repeating the essence of the response from the child while touching with reverence and gratitude the component parts of the story to illustrate it, the storyteller conveys acceptance and appreciation for all responses. The storyteller helps open the child to reflection and wonder as a spiritual practice. See *Sparkling Still* pages viii-xi to learn more about how to use wondering questions with children and stories.

Four core questions often used in Godly Play and Faith & Play stories are:

I wonder which part of the story you like best?

I wonder which part of the story is the most important part (to you today)?

I wonder where you are in this story, or what part of the story is about you?

I wonder if there is any part of this story we could leave out and still have all the story we need? [1]

Wondering questions are meant to help the child expand and discover the Spirit working in the lives of the characters in a Bible story, contemporary story, fictional story... and in the lives of the children and adults sharing the story. We invite you to discover this way of experiencing the Spirit.

Planning Intergenerational Activities

The Spiritual Deepening library contains many exercises that are appropriate for All Ages. These activities offer opportunities to build intergenerational connections by bringing adults and young people together for mutual learning. As you consider planning intergenerational activities as part of your meeting’s Spiritual Deepening experience, there are several possibilities to explore:

[1] Jerome W. Berryman, *The Complete Guide to Godly Play, Volume 1*, (Denver CO: Morehouse Education Resources, 2002, 2005), 15-16.

- A Spiritual Deepening small group of adults may schedule a time when the whole meeting, including children and teens, can come together for a Spiritual Deepening exercise. Making a Listening Mural and Wandering in the Wilderness are good options to consider.



- The adults may coordinate with the First Day School (children’s program) teachers to explore the same Spiritual Deepening topic over the same time period. For example, each group may separately focus on The Light, Seed, Christ Working In Us for four sessions and come together for the fifth session to share an All Ages activity. The adults and children can share together what they’ve done and what they’ve learned about the topic.

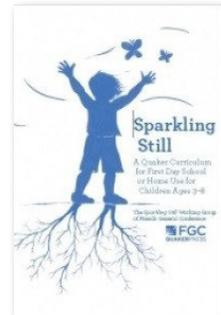


- The children may invite the adults in the meeting to read a picture book with them and use wondering questions to share with each other their spiritual stories. This may work especially well after the children have already read the book and discussed it together. Start with *The Forgiveness Garden* or *Places of Power*, or any of the books listed in the Grounding for Children sections.

Additional Resources for Spiritual Deepening with Children

Sparkling Still

The art of teaching lies not so much in imparting facts and stories to children, but in offering them the opportunity to explore their own unique ideas and perspectives in a safe and nurturing environment. This is nowhere more true than in a First Day School setting where children are introduced to spiritual ideas and given the freedom to express and wonder about the sacred and the divine, and about life. *Sparkling Still* offers new and experienced First Day School teachers a framework and ideas on sharing these tender and mysterious concepts with children ages 3 to 8 through children’s picture books.



Sparkling Still provides:

- Philosophical grounding in the Quaker concept of continuing revelation is discussed and explored through wondering questions
- Practical considerations including a master lesson plan template and concrete suggestions about building classroom community as well as logistical concerns.
- Seven ready-to-use lesson plans and nearly 30 pages of additional book suggestions and where to go for more ideas
- An appendix with Teacher Resources including websites, books and articles to enrich and expand the leader’s own spiritual growth and understanding of the faith development of children.

Sparkling Still is available from QuakerBooks of FGC.

Faith & Play™

Faith & Play™ stories are the Quaker extension of Godly Play®, a religious education curriculum written primarily for children ages 3-13. Friends have found that they are also “wonder-full” story experiences for adults and



multigenerational groups. The stories and wondering together about them offer opportunities to build spiritual community and deepen our experience of Quaker faith, practice and witness. Storytellers use three-dimensional materials, so that both language and images are offered, drawing in the

listener in profound ways. Faith & Play stories use a particular method of storytelling for supporting children’s spiritual lives, and work best when storytellers have participated in “Playing in the Light” training offered by FGC with Godly Play/Faith & Play trainers. Learn more about Faith & Play stories and Godly Play for Friends. The full collection of Faith & Play stories is available for purchase.



Faith & Play was created by Friends trained to use Godly Play®, a storytelling curriculum for exploring Bible stories, authored by Jerome Berryman.

YouTube Videos

Many children’s books are freely available on YouTube. Often the book is read as if it were being read aloud to children. Many of the Spiritual Deepening activities and readings for children include links to videos of books being read. We know that not all of the recommended books are available in many local libraries and some older books are not readily available anymore. We also recorded videos of some of our own favorite books so that Friends will be able to use the Spiritual Deepening lessons without being prohibited by the cost of buying books or the challenge of tracking down older selections.

Also Recommended

Worship in Song: The Friends Hymnal

Lighting Candles in the Dark, Marnie Clark, Elinor Briggs, Carol Passmore, editors. FGC, (2001)

Lives That Speak: Stories of Twentieth-Century Quakers, edited by Marnie Clark, FGC (2004), Stories appropriate for Middle, High School, and Adults.

Opening Doors to Quaker Worship, The Religious Education Committee of FGC (1994) E-Book available through Quaker Books