

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION NEWSLETTER

NEW ENGLAND YEARLY MEETING OF FRIENDS

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YEARLY MEETING COMING UP!

Get in your registration now for New England Yearly Meeting Annual Sessions, **August 5-10!** (deadline before late fees is July 7). Remember that equalization is offered to 2/3 of the cost and the form is included in the registration materials that were in the *June New England Friend*.

It's a wonderful time of connection and renewal for the whole family, whether it's in business meeting, workshops, worship, speakers, or free time activities. Children of all ages have their own programs, which enable them to be part of a kids community within the larger Quaker community that assembles that week.

Take advantage of the workshop opportunity that is being offered on Wednesday: "Teaching Quaker Testimonies to Children" with Jean McCandless.

Here is her description:

"Our job as Christian Education Committees is to help educate our children about Quaker history and traditions, so that they can make sound religious decisions for themselves as they grow older. Quaker testimonies play an essential role in our heritage and daily lives. However, aside from an adult curriculum and pieces of existing children's material, there is no satisfactory and complete curriculum to help us teach testimonies to our children. This workshop will review the principles of curriculum development and give participants a chance to develop a basic lesson plan themselves."

A WAKENING MINDS AND HEARTS

An opportunity to meet with other Quaker educators and parents is available from Friends General Conference:

*Awakening Minds and Hearts,
Religious Educators Institute 2000
August 17-20, 2000.*

An invitation from the FGC Religious Education Committee:

"Come join us for a weekend of Workshops, Interest Groups, Speakers, and Worship as we focus on Religious Education in our meetings and homes. We will explore creative ways to deepen the spiritual connections between parents and children, our meetings and our children, and between adults in our faith communities.

Children from 0-12 are invited to come to the Junior Program as well as participate in scheduled intergenerational Worship and activities. Participants will choose one immersion Workshop to attend both Friday and Saturday mornings and three separate Interest Groups for Friday and Saturday afternoons. Two long-time FGC Friends will be our evening speakers. We look forward to a weekend of fellowship and fun as we share experiences of teaching and learning in the Spirit."

The quality of the presentations and the presenters at the FGC RE Institutes is outstanding. Kevin Lee of New England Yearly Meeting will be one of the speakers at this event. Discussing religious education issues with those equally involved will be an opportunity for growth and inspiration. **DO SEND** one or two people from your meeting. Find a way for your meeting to support their attendance. It will be an investment in your children and your meeting.

Registrations need to be postmarked by July 31 to avoid a \$20.00 late fee. Adult fees are \$160.00 off campus, \$185.00 for camping, \$235.00 in a room. Children's fees are \$110 for camping or on the floor; \$140.00 with a bed. The conference is being held at Massanetta Springs Conference Center in Harrisonburg, Virginia, a beautiful setting on acres of woodland and meadows in the Shenandoah Valley.

For more information call FGC at 215-561-1700.

I also have the brochure and registration forms: Chris @ 617-625-4494.

Engaging Middle-schoolers: Ideas from The Field

It is one of the frustrations of teaching from the Bible that when children are just beginning to have the mental and emotional capacities to really deal with this very deep and mystical writing, they (our middle-schoolers) are often out the door. There are possibilities, though, for a dedicated teacher/s (teams recommended!) to retain their imagination and interest. Here are three examples.

A Study of the Gospel of Mark for Sixth Through Eighth

From the author, Alicelee Riley:

"This course was developed partly as an experiment to begin to try to encourage the children to open up their thinking about religion, even if they ultimately reject it all. Thus, I decided to use the concept of power as the central theme of the study of the Gospel of Mark. By showing the children how Jesus used his power and helping them relate to the way they use power in their own lives, my hope was that they might become more interested in the Bible, religion, Friends, and the special example of Jesus."

Since personal power is such an important issue for this age group, it seems to me that this curriculum might be quite successful at capturing the interest of these middle schoolers. It certainly could be used with even a very small group.

The curriculum is divided into 12 sessions, though the author admits that often a session, if juicy with interaction, would take longer than an hour, and that the divisions could be made differently. Her primary method is reading with questions for discussion and journal writing.

This loose leaf curriculum was developed and used by Alicelee Riley of Hopewell Monthly Meeting in Winchester, Virginia, dated 1982. You may contact me to get a copy of the curriculum: Chris at 617-625-4494 or cmjorgens@aol.com

Drama as a Vehicle

Junior high teachers Lynne Weiss and Carol Korty at Cambridge Meeting heard that one or more of the class members had asked, "So what's the big deal about Easter?" They found a Unitarian Universalist curriculum called "Kingdom of Equals; Jesus' Radical Path to Love and Justice", written for junior high students, to familiarize the students with the Easter narrative. The class read the narrative aloud together and tried some of the activities, such as reading a script and sharing matzos and grape juice while discussing the events of the Last Supper prior to Jesus' arrest. They adapted a script for an Easter play that was included in the curriculum and presented it at Family Meeting on a Sunday near Easter.

If you would like more information about the curriculum and their process, you could call Lynne Weiss at 617-923-3549.

Gospel Writing

"Sacred Writings: The Four Gospels; an Experiment in Gospel Writing for Middle School Students", a curriculum developed by Curt Torell and Margaret Heyboer, is being reviewed right now by Friends General Conference for publication. In ten sessions (though perhaps more would be helpful), the students look at existing Gospels and then write their own story about a person who would be "the Son of God, Savior, God on Earth, God with us, and/or Christ and who has come into the world with a special message of salvation from God. This person should personify goodness and compassion, especially for the poor and those who are oppressed."

Becky Morehouse, of Ann Arbor Meeting, field tested the curriculum and has this to say:

"Curt and his co-teacher have created a curriculum which is well crafted, well researched well documented, and fun. They begin with an explanation of the developmental aspects of middle schoolers and create an atmosphere of appropriate learning and activity. Curt has experience in child development, religious education, and Quaker parenting. His co-leader is an older Friend who added her wonderful perspective to each lesson.

Other Friends might be better able to discern it's historical accuracy, but I felt that it was a wonderful way of opening the door to dialogue on Jesus and his ministry. The element of the students writing their own story (with their own characters) after looking of that of Jesus helps them to internalize the important concepts. One of its strengths is that it pulls in other adult "helpers" so the children have the benefit of interacting with adults of the meeting and yet each adult can participate without any preparation. It does a terrific job of providing intergenerational opportunities without the "fear".

It is geared very specifically toward middle school youth, but I was trying it with high school youth. My co-leader and I found that it is really most useful for middle school. (Our high school Friends are more interested in "chat" (with disguised lessons/food for thought) than they are in a planned lesson.) It's one of those very complete curriculums that has background and concrete lesson plans, with child development in mind. A teacher could pick it up and have a full semester unit ready to go. "

If you are interested in field testing this curriculum, contact me, Chris @617-625-4494 or cmjorgens@aol.com.

SUMMERTIME IDEAS

Learn About Turkana

Use the 2000 Children's Mission Project sponsored by Friends United Meeting. Last year's campaign contributed more than \$11,000 toward medical equipment for children at Lugulu Hospital in Kenya. This year's project is to provide \$9000 for local artisans to build desks for children in the Lokoyo and Nakiria Primary Schools.

The packet from FUM gives you five sessions (could be vacation bible school) which include a recipe, a game, a language lesson, Bible study, and directions to build a traditional Turkana hut. Contact Chris @617-625-4494 for a copy.

Making First Day School Aids

Have the children help you make teaching aids for the upcoming year. Clothespin dolls, sock puppets, flannel board figures and backgrounds, posters, a "Welcome to First Day School" sign. Older students could make the flannel board or puppet stage. Learning about the life and times of the stories to be told would be a part of the craft experience.

Crafts for Sale

Find out what simple crafts that meeting members might be able to teach and engage your students in making crafts for a sale at the end of the summer. Part of the experience would also be making the decision about what organization they would like to contribute their earnings to. Similarly, making lunch or snacks for the meeting could be a good service activity and possible moneymaker.

Meeting Meeting Members

Maybe summertime is the time to interview meeting members, asking the kids who they would like to get to know better and devising questions. Of course, one would need to coordinate with vacations, etc., but it's also a chance to do some fair weather adventures with these Friends: a visit to their home or a special place for them, if it's close; a show and tell time with some of their artifacts; playing a game that they liked to play when they were a child.

Adventures in Prayer

Maybe summertime is time to do a "special unit". You could become familiar as a class with the Lord's Prayer. Look at the individual parts. Pictures and activities can be recorded in a prayer journal: what is "heaven" to you? why is "daily bread" important? (let's make some!) what is being forgiven like? how can we express that we're sorry for something? How could we write a prayer in our own language? How do people in the meeting pray? (again, an opportunity to pull in meeting members)

An Experience of Service

from Woodstown Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, from an article in PYM News, Nov-Dec 1997

The penny container to collect donations to the Pennies for Copper campaign had only a hundred pennies after a whole year of sitting in the back of the Woodstown Meeting's worship room.

The children decided to take over the campaign.

They made a banner using 1000 pennies to spell out the campaign name. They designed their own collection containers, and asked for contributions after worship. Friends began bringing containers of collected coins. Children began to plan activities to raise money. A bake sale was followed by a craft sale of candle jars and bookmarks. In the spring, a car wash brought together 25 friends ages 2-65 to clean cars while others attended First Day School, raising \$173.09 in less than two hours.

The Work Camp receiving the donations sent a letter describing the service that the \$1607.09 collected had enabled. The children sensed that they had led the way, and the adults followed.

A Family Time Activity (with a twist)

from Focus on The Family

One summer Carol and Ray Leaman's family of Lancaster, PA, was traveling to the West Coast when the parents declared a "kindness" day. "We each pulled a name from a hat and had to be especially kind to that family member without the others knowing whose name we had picked. The day was a success. The next morning our son Durelle announced that since we had had such a fun day he wanted to play the game again. Durelle passed the hat with the names he had prepared. It wasn't long before we noticed that everyone was being especially kind to Durelle – he had written his own name on every slip of paper!"

but still, a fun idea don't you think? – ed.

From Max Carter, Friends Center Director, Guilford College (from their newsletter, Winter 97-98) :

"When I was invited earlier this fall to speak at Pendle Hill on the topic of *spiritual development among adolescents*, I asked the students in my "Jesus at 2000" class on campus to share with me what concerns they had that I might share on the topic. Several identified 'booze, sex, and rock and roll' as problems universal among their age group, largely because of the wider culture not offering meaningful "rites of passage" for them, they invent ones of their own. What they told me would be helpful for them in avoiding the pitfalls of adolescence might surprise you; I know it did me. Students told me they wanted more 'God talk,' more sharing about God's love, acceptance, and forgiveness; they wanted more community, spiritual friends, prayer buddies, and mentors; they wanted significant rites of passage: and they wanted opportunities for being of service to others."

Peace Education for Preschoolers: Reading Picture Books

*From "Peace Grows Bulletin", 148 Beck Street, Wadsworth, OH
44281 Spring 1998*

Young children can learn basic *Alternatives to Violence* skills as an integral part of their daily lives. One excellent way to reinforce these concepts is through reading picture books to them and talking together about the story. Parents, grandparents, day care providers, librarians, all of us who have the opportunity to read to youngsters can incorporate peace education into the natural rhythm of reading aloud.

Feelings Vocabulary. Even the youngest child is sensitive to facial expressions and the emotions they convey. When reading aloud, ask children how they think the character feels or how they would feel in that situation. Relate an emotion to how one's body feels when experiencing the emotion. Refer back to a well-loved story when a child's feelings are similar to those in the book.

Also, show toddlers how to play the Face Game. Say "surprised" and make a face which shows surprise, continue by making faces for "mad", "scared", and so on as you name the feeling. Let them have a turn making emotive faces and naming the feeling. As they mature we need to provide preschoolers with an increasing array of words to describe feelings such as embarrassed, curious, lonely, uncertain, excited. This practice enables them to understand and express their own emotions, as well as empathize with others.

Some recommended titles are *My Many Colored Days* by Dr. Seuss, *Quick As a Cricket* by Audrey Wood and *Goose* by Molly Bang.

Differences and Similarities. A young child's small world can open marvelously through picture books. Different faces, different families and different lands become more real on each page. Learning to accept our uniqueness and still recognize that we all have similar needs is not a task too big for a preschooler's book, it is a common theme in children's literature. Pointing out these themes helps to emphasize their importance. A child will grasp the meaning more when it can be connected to their own experiences.

A simple example is that we have different tastes in food, but that we all get hungry. Learning to affirm the worth of others without judging them is a skill more easily taught to children than unlearned by adults.

Some good books on the subject are: *People* by Peter Spier, *Whoever You Are* by Mem Fox and *Children Just Like Me* by Barnabas and Anabel Kindersley.

Active Listening/ Clear Stating. Miscommunication, misconstrued intentions and other missed opportunities for understanding are a staple plot in picture books. Young

children most emphatically want to be listened to. They know how it feels to be ignored, interrupted and overruled. Ask a child, "How can you tell when I'm listening to you?" or "How do I know you are listening to me?" Comment on the effects of good or poor communication in the story being read. Using appropriate picture books, talk about the value of listening to others as well as the importance of explaining one's own stance without blaming, threatening or putting down anyone else.

Some relevant titles are: *The Island of the Skog* by Steven Kellog, *Peace Begins With You* by Katherine Scholes and *Six Crows* by Leo Lionni.

Solving Conflicts. When picture books include a conflict it may not be one that is solved peaceably. Do not censor these, but use them as valuable conversation starters. Brainstorm other possible solutions, adding suggestions if children can't think of a range of options. You may want to pause in the middle of the story and ask for children's opinions. The story can be revised using puppets to re-enact the plot in different ways. Talk about the long-range impact of negative responses to conflict like ignoring, using trickery, or force. Many other picture books offer nonviolent responses to conflict. The beauty and meaning of such stories need little reinforcement beyond our approval.

Some recommended books are: *Swimmy* by Leo Lionni, *Tacky the Penguin* by Helen Lester and *The Wolf's Chicken Stew* by Keiko Kasza.

Ethics. Picture books which center on living out our ethics, whether through making a difficult decision or fulfilling a life's quest, are rarely flat moralistic tales. Preschoolers seem drawn to stories which shine with truthful questions about our values. After reading such books, the message gains meaning when a parallel story is told. Try recalling a similar quandary you faced, a goal someone in your family worked toward, even a success the child had with showing kindness.

Some excellent books are: *Milo and the Magical Stones* by Marcus Pfister, *Miss Rumphius* by Barbara Cooney and *The Money Tree* by Sarah Stewart.

Good picture books illustrate the meaning of nonviolence for us and for the children we read to. Stories can be a clear path to understanding that the true power behind peace is love.

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Library

When you're looking for resources for your First Day School class, especially on a particular topic or if the book you want is out of print, try Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's lending library. They now have booklists available on their web site: www.pym.org and you can request books by phone or email: 215-241-7219 or Library@pym.org. The annual fee for subscription membership to the library is \$50.00.

Peace Begins at Home (We Wish!)

*Adapted from an article in the Boston Globe,
"Checking the Child Wars" by Barbara Meltz, April 2000.*

An exchange between a 7-year-old and
his 5-year-old sister:

"Did you know you were born as a puppy?"

"I was not!"

"Yes you were, I was there, I saw you."

"I was not!!"

"Were too! Were too!"

"I hate you! I hate you! Mommyyyy"

Can't it seem sometimes that summertime is just more time for the kids to bicker? Bickering is a complex interaction, almost always a ploy for parental attention, and full of positive and negative messages. It could sometimes be a sort of positive affirmation, a cover for the affection that siblings don't know yet how to express positively. It might also indicate a security with one's family: after a particularly frustrating day at school, a child might take it out on someone they feel safe with.

Of course there are plenty of times when bickering does reflect temporary hatred and unhappiness and/or significant unhappiness, and/or significant differences, says parent educator Adel Faber, co-author of the best-selling book, *Siblings Without Rivalry* (Avon).

"Two siblings like loud music, the third doesn't. One likes to draw, two think drawing is stupid. These are natural frictions. Even the best marriage has them," she says.

As natural as bickering may be, it can't be left unchecked. "That leaves at least one child feeling unsafe," says Faber. On the other hand, it's a mistake to always impose solutions. "When the solution is a parent's decision, kids only get invested in fighting more. When it's their decision, their investment is in making it work," she says.

Keeping bickering in check is a process that begins in the preschool years by setting ground rules – "There is no hitting or grabbing in this house, and no teasing" – as well as expectations: "In our family, when someone is upset, we use words to describe what we want and how we feel. We don't use words to hurt people."

When an infraction occurs, here's what Faber suggests:

- Restate the problem. Ask each child to describe the problem, then restate it yourself: "You both want to sit in the same chair, and you each were mean to the other. Is that right?"
- Acknowledge feelings. "No wonder you're both so upset, this is a hard problem! Two brothers want to sit in the same chair at the same time."
- State the rule. "You know the rule: We don't say anything mean."
- Offer options. "Let's figure out what you can do to solve this problem. Should you set a timer, so you each have a turn? Can two brothers sit in the chair together?"

- Express confidence in them. "Jeff, I think you are a fair person. Matt, you're also a reasonable person."

- Walk away. "I trust you two to work this out in a way that's fair to you, Jeff, and to you, Matt." Don't go too far away in case things accelerate, but resist going back in unless it does.

- If bickering escalates or graduates to hitting or pushing, you do need to intervene: "This is a dangerous situation. You three are so angry with one another, you can't work this out. You each need to go to a separate room to cool off." Children are usually grateful for this, says Faber: "They don't like it when bickering escalates, but they need a face-saving way to stop."

Empowering children is not the same as yelling in to them from the next room, "Work it out, kids!" Being present to say "Do you three need help or can you work it out yourselves?" will give permission for any one of them to say, "Yes, we need help."

Praise and structure can gradually change the atmosphere for bickering. In times of cooperation, of sharing, or of working out differences of preferences, acknowledge and praise them. Show them that you pay attention when they aren't in conflict, too. If particular situations seem to provoke conflict consistently, suggest developing structure – a chart, a set way to take turns, some regulator of fairness – and ask the children for their ideas. Also agree on consequences ahead of time – "What should I do if you refuse to do what you agreed to do?"

Other ideas to help break the cycle might be to hold a family meeting to restate your values: "There's constant bickering in the house. This is not the kind of family or atmosphere Mom and I want. We want everyone to think about this and come up with at least two suggestions for a family meeting Saturday at 10."

Consider the possibility that bickering is an opportunity, not a nightmare. The more you express confidence in their problem-solving, the more they will think of themselves as problem solvers and the better they will be at resolving conflict in general. As with any skill-building, try to help them find the tools they need. For instance, if a 4-year-old gets victimized by a toddler, tell him, "When you see the baby coming and you know he's going to take something, say, 'Stop!' and hold out your hand." Tell a preschooler who gets teased by an older sib, "Walk away to another room."

Post-script from the editor:

Just as Quaker marriages include promises made "with divine assistance", we can teach our children that divine assistance is the foundation of family life, too. The challenge to children as peacemakers can be the hardest in their sibling interactions. In prayer with your children, acknowledge before them and God what a challenge it is and what your hopes for them and your family life are. Suggest to them that they can take these problems into prayer themselves and that God is always listening. Perhaps that will be one of the lessons of problem-solving: structures help, listening to each other helps, and talking to and listening to God helps, too.

Reflections on Why Quakers Rely on the Bible

from Barbara Cummings St. John, reprinted from the First Day School pages of Cambridge Monthly Meeting.

The Bible is one of the greatest books in the world. Stretching back through the most ancient of times, it is a chronicle of God's search for man and man's search for God. It contains endless stories, told over the centuries of the experiences and continuing revelations and breakthroughs in the spiritual evolution of man that forever press upon us. As Rabbi Heschel says, "Religion is what man does with the presence of God."

It was the Bible, put in print in the 16th century that opened a new life and vision for George Fox and early Friends. Their belief in 'that of God in everyone', the Bible and their deep sharing in communal worship brought them courage to reach out into the world with their testimony. Though for years his Quaker witness brought acute suffering, imprisonment and sometimes death, it still maintains today its faith and its work for reconciliation.

I remember my early childhood where my Quaker grandmother used to take her young brood on picnics in the mountain meadows. First there was a fire and food to eat, then came the Bible stories, with Nana sitting on her folding chair and we scattered on the grass. The stories were so alive and fascinating: I shall never forget them! The picnic ended with a tug-of-war with the smallest ones on Nana's side.

I suggest that parents and children read and tell these Bible stories together at home. Then on First Day, to bring these stories back to the classroom, ponder them, draw them, sing them. Stories like Noah and his ark, Moses and the burning bush, the Passover of the Red Sea, Ruth, the coal of Isaiah's lips. I can't think how we can teach kids about the Inner Light without the Bible. Children need a person (or people) to understand the Spirit. With the Biblical stories we can go through the Old Testament and show times when people were touched by God and so changed their life. Think of Jacob when he saw the ladder, or how Paul persecuted the Jews and then stopped. There is always a cleansing of the person who is then called to do something different with their lives. Henry Cadbury, part of Cambridge Meeting and Professor of Divinity School, said, "Complacent orthodoxy is the recurrent villain in the story [of the Bible] and the hero is the challenger, like Job, the Prophets, Jesus and Paul."

A study of the life and teachings of Jesus can come at home and again on First Day—his parables, healings, compassion, his inclusion of women, his joy and suffering. All this with the knowledge that Jesus was a Jew -- that his faith and insights flowed right from a deeply rooted and thorough knowledge of the Old Testament. New revelations came to him that would revolutionize the world and witness to the love and mercy and magnitude of God.

These miracles can happen to our lives now. You can see it happen. We need to speak of it to the children. There is a life force that is always pressing us on to grow and grow. Quakers believe in the immediacy of God's assistance—it surrounds us all the time, like oxygen. Nowadays when the mainstream churches are losing their power, something new has to happen. It might as well happen through Friends.

Guidelines for Selecting Bible Stories for Preschool Children

from the Massachusetts Conference UCC Christian Educators' Newsletter, September 1997

As you consider specific stories for preschool children, it would be helpful to recognize levels of perception and skill of the children. One of the primary factors to consider is the ability to think abstractly.

A teacher asked a child, "What is the word that is something like a million?" The child responded, "You mean a dozen?" Young children bring this sort of understanding to the story of Jesus feeding the multitude. They can, however, appreciate the fact that Jesus cared when the people were hungry, and that there was a boy in the crowd who shared.

In all miracle stories shared with young children, we need to emphasize the caring aspect of Jesus. We want children to realize that miracles are different from magic which is built on illusions.

If your church doesn't have a curriculum, consider some of the stories listed here. If a story is introduced when it relates to a current life experience, then the story has more meaning. In this way, you can tailor the choice of stories to the needs of each child.

- The Hebrew Bible
God Made the World (Genesis 1:1, 27, 31)
- New Testament
Birth of Jesus (Luke 2:1-7) Shepherds Hear the Good News (Luke 2:8-20)
Jesus Grew and Helped Joseph (Luke 2:39-40)
A Boy Shares His Lunch of Loaves and Fishes (John 6:1-14)
Jesus Helps Jairus' Daughter (Luke 8:40-42, 49-56)
Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)
Jesus Loves the Children (Luke 18:15-17)
Jesus Rides into Jerusalem (Mark 11:1-11)
Jesus' Last Supper (Matthew 26:17-20, 26-28; Mark 14:17-25; Luke 22:14-38)
Jesus Has a Cookout with His Friends (omitting when it happened – John 21:1-13)

A Couple of My Favorite Resources

from Chris Jorgenson

I admit it, I have favorites. I tote around boxes and boxes of First Day School and Parenting materials and I have favorites.

In Our Image; God's First Creatures

by Nancy Sohn Swartz; *Jewish Lights Publishing, 1998*

Oh, my favorite new picture book. I now give it as a baby present because parents should have this book.

Jewish Lights publishes a number of excellent picture books that are "midrash" on Hebrew scriptures – that is, they are stories that amplify Bible stories and this one uses as its starting point: In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth. And when the earth was almost done, God said, 'Let Us make humans in Our image, after Our likeness.' * To whom was God speaking? Who is "us"? Who else is included in the word "our"? (*Look it up. That's what it says)

This book's answer is "The animals, of course!"

It's such a charmer, with wonderful illustrations by Melanie Hall, too. From the chimpanzee to the nightingale, the animals asked God to incorporate the very best gifts, from curiosity to singing, in these new creatures.

But my very favorite part (and I hope I'm not giving away too much of the plot, here) is where:

God thanked all of creation for their gifts.

And God said, "Behold. Woman and man shall fill the earth and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air; and over every living thing that creeps upon the earth."

And all the animals gasped, and fled in fright, and hid behind the shivering trees.

[- I'm thinking, run for your lives, animals! – editor]

"What will become of us?" they cried.

God calmed them and said, "Do not be afraid. For I will create man and woman in My image, after My likeness. Woman and man shall be partners with me to care for you and all the world.

"In addition to your gifts, I will give them the gifts of goodness and kindness and love. I will bless them with the ability to understand and to reason, so they can choose between right and wrong. Just as you give to them, they will give to you."

The animals were no longer afraid. They came out from their hiding places and waited to see what God would create. And all of nature waited to see its reflection.

Okay, is that great, or what. By the way, Jewish Lights is based in Woodstock, VT. To get their catalogue, call 1-800-962-4544 or try the web at www.jewishlights.com. Check out the other children's books, particularly those by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso.

How to Train Volunteer Teachers

by Delia Halverson; *Abingdon Press, 1991*

"These twenty stimulating, thirty-minute workshops show how to train volunteer teachers in a way that will dramatically increase the effectiveness of your Christian education program." There are workshops on motivating, caring for, understanding the student, discipline, Bible skills, storytelling, planning a class session, and more.

Notice: thirty-minute workshops. If you get chatty, you might hang on for forty five. But doesn't that sound possible? Asking for thirty minutes? Maybe you also ask it of your meeting. How about if once in awhile, someone else takes the kids so that your teachers can have some enrichment time during teaching time? Not all of the material is usable (teaching about the church year, for example, or big church concerns), but I think much is helpful. And preparing to lead the workshop would also provide a kind of enrichment, a different kind of experience. It might also be a way to involve your retired First Day School teachers in helping along the current program.

The first workshop begins with "The ABC's of Teaching: About education in the church; Becoming aware of the students; Considering my call as a teacher." What IS the purpose of education at meeting? How CAN we be more aware of our students? What DOES it mean to be called as a teacher? All are important.

You may need to make things more open-ended than this resource, to adapt the prayers and terminology. But also challenge yourself and others to be verbal about spiritual things and addressing God. Children are concrete thinkers and need some concrete words and images to go with their experiences of faith development. We need some practice in claiming faith using words, out-loud prayer, and in speaking about and to God, Christ, Jesus, using the many names of the divine. We are in this for our own faith development, too. Do not be afraid to call this ministry and to expect God to work through you and the other teachers.

The closing of the first workshop is a kind of silent prayer experience, where you ask the teachers to close their eyes as you read, pausing after statements for thoughts. (I've already done some Quakerly modification):

- What gifts and abilities has God given you? It may be a sense of humor, a listening heart, an ability with words or music, or a deep love for sharing God.
- What needs do you see around you, in the community, in the meeting, in your classroom?
- How might your gifts touch these needs?
- Think about your call. Your call is to a vocation for God – not a career, but a vocation that encompasses all of life.
- Ask God to be with you, work through you.
- Amen.

