

# CHRISTIAN EDUCATION NEWSLETTER

## NEW ENGLAND YEARLY MEETING OF FRIENDS

ISSUE #22 NEYM OFFICE, 901 PLEASANT STREET, WORCESTER MA 01602

November, 2000

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### Inside this issue:

- Networking Resources (this page)
- Making the Lesson: Curriculum Format
- Service Ideas for Adults and Children
- A Family Meeting Story
- Feeding the Children in Your Meeting
- Companions Along the Way, Book Review
- Christmas Ideas (page 7)
- Two Childrens Books Reviews

### **BREAK OUT!**

.....of your isolation as a First Day School teacher! Take opportunities to talk with others who are working with religious education in their meetings.

The Christian Education Committee of New England Yearly Meeting focuses its work on providing materials and support for First Day School and other religious education programs within monthly meetings.

They can help you organize a sharing session in your quarterly meeting, for instance – a chance to look at new curriculum materials, talk about joys and problems, gather ideas, refresh your interest and enthusiasm. Maybe you will find someone who has already developed a unit that you can use in your meeting, or who has found a way to connect with kids in a way you hadn't thought of.

*Please contact one of these Christian Ed. Committee members with your requests, questions or comments:*

- Gail Thomas, Clerk, Cambridge Monthly Meeting, 617-492-5035, email: thomasg9@aol.com
- Hans-Dieter Gomes, Providence MM and Saylesville, 401-728-4184
- Jennifer Hogue, Cambridge MM, 617-868-4415
- Andy Linn, Monadnock MM, 603-924-9373
- George Munger, Mt. Toby MM, 413-253-9563
- Peggy O'Reilly, Wellesley MM, 617-489-6449
- Cynthia Rankin, West Falmouth MM, 508-540-6570
- Karen Sargeant, Worcester MM, 978-874-2201
- Sarah Spencer, Beacon Hill MM, 617-965-7042,
- Lea Sutton, Portland MM, 207-642-2327
- Alex Vanderburgh, Cambridge MM, 781-643-9323
- Margaret Wentworth, Durham MM, 207-353-6329

*It's not too early to make that New Year's resolution to attend an enrichment event!*

*The first two steps:*

1. Get a 2001 Calendar (or make notes on December 31)
2. Mark these dates as "reserved".

**PREPARING THE WAY:** *developing, writing, and using Quaker curricula*

is the theme for a weekend April 6-8, 2001, at Pendle Hill, Wallingford PA. Sponsored by Friends General Conference and Pendle Hill, it will be a chance to gain skills and materials for use in developing curricula for any age. Ask your meeting to sponsor your attendance. Look for information coming to your meeting, or you could contact Michael Gibson at FGC at MichaelG@fgcquaker.org .

**FOCUS ON FAMILIES:** *a weekend for families at Woolman Hill*

will happen April 27-29, 2001 at Woolman Hill, Deerfield MA. Kevin Lee and Anne Anderson will be resources for a weekend of intergenerational fun and relaxation, along with discussions with other parents about the joys, uniqueness and challenges of parenting within Quaker households. For more information contact Woolman Hill at WoolmanH@gis.net or 413-774-3431.

### **Quaker materials and curriculum**

are available for purchase from:

- ☎ Friends General Conf. Bookstore - 1/800-966-4556
- ☎ Quaker Hill Bookstore- 1/800-537-8838
- ☎ Pendle Hill Bookstore - 1/800-742-3150

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting operates a *lending library*, an excellent source for background books for your curriculum or out-of-print materials. Call them at 1/800-2200-PYM.

NEYM Youth and Education Secretary Chris Jorgenson is also available to consult about your program and help you find materials and other resources. 617-625-4494, email: cmjorgens@aol.com, 22 Cherry Street, Somerville MA 02144

# *Making the Lesson: a Successful Quaker Curriculum Format*

*At New England Yearly Meeting Sessions in August, Jean McCandless of Burlington Monthly Meeting gave a workshop about Teaching the Testimonies to Quaker Children. In the workshop, the participants worked on developing their own lesson plans with help from a structure that Jean provided. Here are the steps and checklist from a gifted and experienced teacher that will help you to plan lessons and/or units from material that you'd like to teach*

## *1. Adult Background Material*

Brief readings giving general information about the topic from Quaker history and contemporary Quakerism are a helpful review for seasoned teachers and essential for teachers new to either teaching and/or Quakerism. A short bibliography is helpful for people who want to do more background preparation.

## *2. Primary Teaching Points*

Summarize in 2-3 sentences the primary teaching points for the age group you will be teaching. It is useful to organize your thinking in terms of thematic statements which you use in planning class material and talking directly with the children.

## *3. Lesson Plan*

Outline a plan for an hour class (or 15 minutes more than you actually have!) listing each activity and the preparation needed to complete it.

As the first step, write a 2-3 sentence introduction that you can use to start class. Be sure to plan a lesson that includes an art project, a story, games and/or a play.

Art projects often will need to be a "listening art project" that is designed to keep children's hands busy why you explain the primary teaching points, etc. If you can think of a project that relates to the day's lesson, all the better.

Stories or Bible readings may either be read by the teacher or the children themselves.

Remember to schedule snack.

Be flexible – be ready to respond to children's questions which may take you in a different direction than you had planned!

Preparation: If teachers have time and interest, count on spending at least 1-2 hours preparing for a Sunday School lesson. More complex lessons, with big art projects or elaborate props and scenery for plays, may take three or four hours or more. Pre-school-kindergarten classes generally take more hands-on preparation than those for older children.

Art Project: We always plan a very simple, relatively non-distracting art activity that is spread out on the table when

the children arrive. These can keep their hands busy during the early part of the class when the teacher is primarily talking. [If you want to do more elaborate art projects, be sure to have finished all your preparation BEFORE class starts. Beware of the art project that needs so much teacher time and assistance that the lesson gets lost.]

Story: Our children like to be read to and look forward to hearing stories. Often we read a story about the class topic at the beginning of class while children are working on a simple art project. Most curriculums will suggest book titles. (it will be a problem to find titles listed in older curriculums. Many can be borrowed from the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Library.) Sometimes children want to tell stories of their own which relate to what they have just heard. Children are intuitively interested in stories in which children are heroes and heroines. Those who have a specific way of being in the world – who act with integrity demonstrating a consistent adherence to their beliefs and who live integrated lives are particularly attractive. There are many fine examples in both classics of children's literature as well as contemporary writing for young people. Good Quaker stories are available and an effort should be made to have a good collection of available children's and young teens' books in the Meeting library.

Drama: I often write skits or short plays about the lesson or part of the story read in class that day. The children always like acting these out whether it is a parable, an episode from a Dr. Seuss story or the life of an historical Quaker.

When classes are able to, writing their own plays/skits can be very satisfying. One teacher who has an extensive family puppet collections, likes to have the children use puppets to act out situations in their own lives.

Games: Group circle games can be energizing as well as sometimes directly promoting the day's lesson. (With pre-schoolers, for instance, if all else fails, "Duck, Duck, Goose" can always be transformed by using key lesson words!)

Snack: If possible integrate the class snack into the day's lesson plan. For example, if you are doing a testimony lesson on equality, talk about whether the children think everyone should get the same amount of snack (What if someone is hungrier than the other children? If there is a limited amount of food, who should get it?) Or serve









## ***An Advent Group***

from Jesse Kuhn, Cambridge Meeting

Some members of Cambridge Meeting have formed an Advent group. Several families meet together over the course of the season – on the four Sundays of Advent – to share singing, games, meals, and some family worship. Children take turns reading different Bible verses from the Christmas story, and lighting successive Advent candles.

Our group has games like charades with Christmas themes or pretending we're the animals in the stable with Jesus. A delightful part of Advent is when we draw secret buddies at the beginning of the season. We make only homemade gifts or send written prayers on a card to keep our focus on the spiritual rather than the material celebration.

It's wonderful when the children are more focused on what to make their secret buddy than what packages they will get on December 25<sup>th</sup>. What joy when, on the last day of Christmas, around Three Kings Day, we eat together, worship, and guess who was our anonymous giver.

## ***Two FDS Ideas for Christmas***

from Lisa Cox, Putney Meeting – a reprint from the first issue of the NEYM CE Newsletter, November 1987

Last year on the first Sunday of Advent, I talked with the children about darkness and about waiting. We talked about being afraid of the dark and what we most wanted when we were afraid. Turning on the light and having one of our parents there seemed, not surprisingly, the most important remedies. Then I talked about what it was like for the Jews waiting for the Messiah, and read from Isaiah 9:2 and 6, and we saw that the birth of Christ was just like these two remedies: a light and a parent. We talked more about waiting for Christmas and I asked them to think of themselves as like the Jews waiting for a Messiah, and challenged them to convince me that Christmas would really come. Could they be prophets like Isaiah and convince others in the Meeting – the adults, say – that the Messiah would be born? They liked the idea of being prophets, but I'm not sure that the project I came up with was that exciting: we made Christmas cards for the Meeting. Maybe you or the kids in your First Day program can think up some more exciting ways to prophecy the birth of Christ. Perhaps a social service project for those in real need would be a more powerful experience for them.

Kids do like to role play, especially roles that seem powerful to them, and this is what we did for Three Kings Day (January 6). We sang "We Three Kings" and talked about the gifts ("Did anyone here get frankincense in their Christmas stocking?"), then I retold the story, briefly, since they know it pretty well. (I've learned in telling familiar stories to kids that I need to make it brief, but a few specific details – especially anachronistic ones – make it more real. Perhaps one of the kings saw the star out of his

bathroom window while he was brushing his teeth on the morning of the 25<sup>th</sup>. I also gave the kings names of three of the children present – and not all boys!) After the story, I suggested that we all become kings. We made crowns for ourselves and wrapped up imaginary gifts for the Christ child. We gathered again in a circle with our crowns on and took turns giving our gifts to Jonathan, our 8 month-old baby who played the part of Jesus, and telling what our gift was. I closed with a reminder that we now knew who gave the first Christmas presents. Singing "We Three Kings" once more would be a good way to close.

## ***Stained Glass Cookies***

### *Letting the Light Shine Through*

from Susan Dewey, Acadia Meeting

What you need:

- A batch of sugar cookie dough – vanilla or chocolate – make sure the dough is stiff enough to withstand the heat of hot little hands
- Life Savers or some other kind of colorful hard candy
- Cookie sheet parchment paper – two sheets per tray
- Hammer, pestle, something to crush up the candies
- Plenty of extra flour
- Pencils

1. Cut a sheet of parchment into cookies-size pieces
2. Draw a design onto the small piece of parchment
3. Turn the parchment over
4. Outline the design with snakes of cookie dough. You will need copious flour for this step.
5. Crush up the candies and sprinkle them in the spaces you outlined with the dough.
6. Slide the little parchments onto a parchment-lined cookie sheet (the 2<sup>nd</sup> sheet of parchment)
7. Cook at 350 degrees for 10 or so minutes – until the candy is melted and the cookie part is done.
8. Cool and peel off the paper.
9. Let the light shine through them. THEN EAT THEM!

## ***Sheep Hunt***

*Sheep and shepherds are a common theme in Bible stories, especially the Christmas story. Here's a game to go with it:*

Have the children sit in a circle, and select one child to be the Shepherd. Have the Shepherd walk around the outside of the circle asking "Have you seen my sheep?" The Shepherd then describes someone in the circle by saying, "My sheep is wearing a red shirt" or "My sheep has blonde hair." When the child described realizes that she is the sheep, she must jump up, run around the outside of the circle, and sit back down before the shepherd tags her. She becomes the Shepherd whether or not she is tagged. Give each child a chance to be the shepherd and the sheep.

From Children's Ministry Magazine, Jul-Aug 2000, www.cmmag.com

