



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION NEWSLETTER



Issue 23 March 2001 NEYM, 901 Pleasant St., Worcester MA 01602

Who should get this Newsletter? This newsletter comes out two or three times a year. The aim is to help those who are in a teaching role as parents or first day school teachers. We also try to include some adult education resources in every issue. Each meeting gets a copy of every issue, sent to either the clerk or the designated religious education contact. Many other people also receive this directly because they have signed up.

Please help us keep our mailing list current by sending (address above) names and addresses of people active in your meeting's religious education program.

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 215-241-7219 or email at Library@pym.org

What's on line?

www.neym.org – The Yearly Meeting site. A place to find, among other things: the Yearly Meeting calendar, back issues of this newsletter, a teen mentoring packet (listed under "YouthQuake"), an on-line version of the *First Day School and Parenting Resources* booklet (see below)

www.friendscamp.org – the NEYM camp in China ME – time to sign up for next summer!

www.jymretreats.org – NEYM elementary age retreats

www.fgcquaker.org – Friends General Conference, which includes links to the Book Service (also at quakerbooks.org) and Religious Education Committee

www.fum.org – Friends United Meeting – with bookstore

www.afsc.org/qic.htm – Quaker Information Center, which has information about Quakerism and a great service opportunity listing

A bibliography of the NEYM browsing library is available by mail for \$7.50 from the Yearly Meeting (address above) or check it out on line at the Yearly Meeting web site.

First Day School and Parenting Resources describes each book in our collection, with a subject index keyed to age groups and an author index. Check for one in your meeting library since they were distributed to each meeting in August, 1999. The collection is displayed at yearly meeting sessions, and at quarterly or monthly meetings that request a visit from the Christian Education Committee and/or Chris Jorgenson, the Youth and Education Secretary.

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

Parent as Mystic, Mystic as Parent

by David Spangler
Book Review by Jennifer Hogue,
Friends Meeting at Cambridge

David Spangler has written this book as a “celebration of the way in which the mystical and parental paths can parallel each other and come together in wonderful ways.” He uses many examples from his own experience as a professional mystic and father of four children to demonstrate how both practices can reinforce and deepen each other.

With humor and generosity, Spangler encourages those of us who want to bring more spirituality to our parenting. Using examples from his real life as a dad, he helps us to think about how we cooperatively create our children’s “personhood” by being present with them and honoring their emerging and individual spirits. He reminds us that as we allow our children to unfold, we need to help them to make choices and take responsibility for the things they do.

The kind of listening and paying attention necessary for fostering our children’s growth is also an important element in fostering our own connection with the Divine. And both parenting and spiritual practice are made up largely of ordinary activities that we try to integrate with our continual search for that of God in everyone, our children included.

This book inspires parents to find transcendent experiences in the routine of everyday life. The short chapters with titles like Aliens, Selfing, Time, and Edges, are manageable even for busy parents. And for those of us looking for further guidance, Spangler has included a list of suggested readings that he and his wife have found helpful in raising their own children. It is available in paperback from Riverhead books.

Books for Adult Education

Since many meetings use book discussion groups for their adult education, this newsletter has reviewed resources over time. WE WELCOME YOUR CONTRIBUTION of a book review for something successful for you and/or your meeting. These are past reviews and the newsletter edition they’ve been in:

- *The Pursuit of Peace*, from Friends United Meeting, Aug 1997
- *Pattern of Change*, by John Punshon, Aug 1997
- *Listening Spirituality*, by Patricia Loring, Aug 1997
- *The Powers That Be*, by Walter Wink, Feb 1999
- *Inner Tenderings*, by Louise Wilson, Aug 1999
- *Christians At Work*, by Jan Wood, Feb 2000
- *Companions Along the Way*, from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Nov 2000

Putting LIFE into Hebrew Scripture

This is an excellent example of a creative approach to bringing scriptures, both the drama and the principles, to life for First Day School. It is reprinted from the August 1999 CE Newsletter.

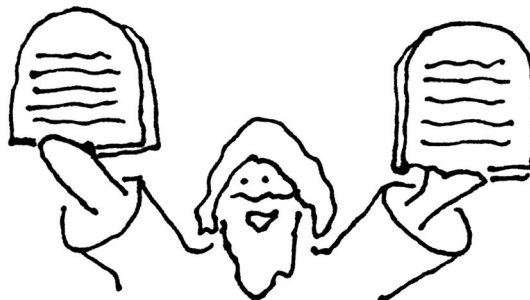
In May, Burlington Meeting did a four week unit on the book of Exodus to finish the Hebrew Scriptures unit that they’d started in the winter. Jean McCandless supplied these details of their multi-age activities:

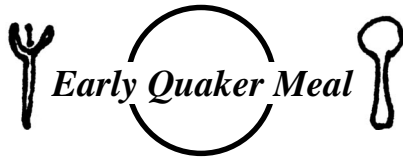
Week 1: We studied Moses and the Burning Bush, prepared props, rehearsed lines and presented the episode to all the adults right after Meeting, complete with five or six youngsters being flames.

Week 2: With much advance preparation by two teachers, we set up in front of the Meetinghouse as the Exodus of the Hebrew people from Egypt. All meeting attenders would come out the front door and start on a path that took them through or past all the plagues, complete with frogs dropping out of one tree, ice cubes dropping out of another (as hail), etc. etc. (de-emphasizing the deaths of animals and children) and ending up with people having to “wade” through the Red Sea, created by children pouring red colored water down sheets of plexiglass. Adults were asked to join us in singing “Let My People Go”. Much work, but the children were very excited and interested in this elaborate street theatre, and will remember this lesson for a very long time.

Week 3: We studied Commandments, including trying to write some of our own commandments. At the rise of Meeting, we asked adults to fill out a questionnaire asking them a) to write down as many of the Commandments as they knew, and, b) write down any personal guidelines for their lives that were currently important to them.

Week 4: We reviewed Commandments and story of their creation. We made “stone tablets” with the commandments printed on them for the grownups (since only two of them knew all ten Commandments!) Adults’ personal “commandments” were cut out (printed from data of last week) and pasted on a giant paper chain which we presented to the adults at the rise of meeting — noting that our community is held together by members’ commitment to living out personal and group “commandments”.





A Project for First Day School Children

by Leonora Cayard, Pittsburgh Friends Meeting
reported from the FGC Religious Education Committee by
Gail Thomas, NEYM CE Committee Clerk

The First Day School program of Pittsburgh Friends Meeting is structured in a three-year rotation of themes:

1. Quaker Values and Testimonies (using our children's version of the Queries as a monthly guide),
2. Quaker Heroes (our attempt to personalize Quaker history and extend it to our days),
3. Quaker Views of the Bible.

All age levels, even to a certain extent the adults, follow the rotation of themes, so that families can share their experiences in religious education

Two years ago, while we were using Mary Snyder's wonderful *Jesus—Who Was He?*, we had a very successful Biblical Meal according to the suggestions in that curriculum. The children and the Meeting community as a whole enjoyed the experience very much. This year is the year of Quaker Heroes, and the First Day School Committee tried to create something similar by including an Early Quaker Meal in our plans.

January 2001 was the month for John Woolman. The description of a meal in the large Woolman family on page 3 of *The Woolman Curriculum, Grades Pre-K – 8*, (Religious Education Committee, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, January, 1994) was our inspiration. The story describes a meal of "savory stew, hot vegetables, and pie." We decided our savory stew would be vegetarian, and therefore we chose cornbread with homemade butter as our side dish. The special event was publicized in the Meeting community well in advance. To make our task a little easier, we asked for a few volunteers to contribute a pie each. Our beverages would be the usual ones provided by the Hospitality Committee, coffee, tea, and juice.

We divided up the preparations. One committee member took on the vegetable stew; one organized the cornbread making. As the mother of a 5-year-old, she knew that kids prefer the cornbread from boxes because it is sweeter than the one made from scratch. Another member brought the whipping cream and the pint jars needed to make butter by shaking cream in jars. She also brought generous amounts of her dried homegrown herbs for the "savory" of the stew. Two strong Friends set up folding tables and chairs.

During the First Day School hour, at the time of Meeting for Worship, a happy and busy crowd worked in the Meeting kitchen and pantry, washing and chopping vegetables, stirring cornbread mix, and taking turns shaking the jars of

whipped cream. It took about half an hour, but the cream finally turned into buttermilk and a soft ball of butter! While the food cooked, little hands made colorful signs indicating the menu items and, as quietly as possible, set the long table in the parlor. Finally, after announcements, Friends streamed out of the Meeting room.

And a miracle occurred. We had had no indication of how many people to expect or how much each would eat, and we witnessed the miracle of the "loaves and the fishes." Every last crumb of food disappeared, and every Friend present was satisfied, even though some of us who ate last did not partake of each dish.

On a small table in a corner, we set up the materials for candle-making, providing an additional experience of history. It was quite a challenge to older kids and some adults to get the melted paraffin to the right temperature for dipping, hot enough to stay liquid and not too hot to congeal. We used 1 pound of canning paraffin, 6 feet of medium wicking from a crafts store cut into four pieces with washers tied to each end to make 4 pairs of candles, and a hot pot with water and a clean soup can to melt the paraffin.

In evaluating our experiences, committee members are very happy with the project, and we recommend it highly to other First Day Schools. Remember to recruit a cleanup crew, an omission we sorely regretted!

The following are the amounts of ingredients we used for about 50 Friends:

Savory Stew:

- 5 pounds of potatoes
- ½ a bunch of celery, chopped
- 1 pound of carrots, chopped
- 1 pound of onions, chopped
- 2 15-ounce cans of kidney beans
- water to cover the vegetables in a large stock pot
- about ½ cup of vegetarian broth powder
- generous fistfuls of dried herbs (parsley, sweet basil, oregano, dill, etc.), rubbed fine



Butter:

- Two 8-oz. containers of sweet whipping cream
- Pinch of salt
- 3 clean pint jars with lids



Cornbread:

- 8 boxes of Jiffy cornbread
- 8 eggs
- milk as indicated on boxes
- Pam
- mixing bowl and baking pans



Pies:

We had five pies and finished them all

Foolproof* Secrets ***for Creating FDS Lesson Plans***

from the NEYM Sessions workshop of the same name, August 1999 by MaryBeth Toomey and Nicholas Horton, reprinted from the Feb 2000 CE Newsletter

[FDS is an abbreviation for First Day School]

1. Always remember that preparing and teaching FDS is part of your spiritual growth. Enjoy. Stay centered.
2. Be prepared. Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance. Arrive early to get off to a good start.
3. Try to teach using all the senses. Different children have different learning styles. Different teachers have different teaching modalities. Use this to your advantage. Try to organize your class in a way that reinforces the main idea of a lesson through congruent activities (listening, drawing, acting, singing, touching, writing).
4. Be aware of the importance of structure. Expected patterns and organization help set the stage for a positive learning experience.
5. Realize that frustrations are inherent in FDS. Consistency of attendance is rare. There are different sets of assumptions in FDS than in other learning settings. Keep your expectations realistic.
6. Be flexible. If a lesson plan isn't working, consider modifying it. If a situation arises that warrants addressing an issue separate from the lesson plan, consider abandoning the original plan to concentrate on that teachable moment.
7. Utilize existing resources to help with planning (these include books and curriculum materials, records from other teachers, and people within your monthly meeting and yearly meeting). Don't reinvent the wheel just for the sake of it.
8. Don't forget to have fun!

*Actually, nothing is really foolproof, since fools are so ingenious. But we offer these ideas as a helpful guide.

Look for Christian Education Committee-sponsored workshops at Sessions next August.

It's time to sign up for **Friends Camp** in China, Maine!



Registration forms were sent out with the last issue of the *New England Friend*. You can also find them on the yearly meeting web site.

Prayer at Home and at Meeting

When your meeting or First Day School Committee discusses its hopes for what is conveyed to the children, what comes up? Something that may not make the list, possibly because it's so basic, is the need to help our children learn to pray. Yet if our desire is to nurture a life long religious journey, what could be more important than helping them find ways to connect with God?

There are many ways that this can be "caught", as well as taught. It may require that you shed some of your privacy about your own relationship with God, allow children to sense your dependency upon the divine.

Some teachers have a sharing circle with their class, where the joys and concerns of the students can be spoken to the group. It makes a natural opportunity to say a simple prayer commending these joys and concerns to God, who knows our hearts so well.

Older children may do a unit on prayer, surveying meeting members about how they pray and report back at class. They can learn the Lord's prayer and ways that it can be rephrased to make the meaning personal. They can make their own prayer journal to record ways they talk to God and what makes them feel close to the divine.

A small group of parents were talking about prayer at Vassalboro Quarter last fall, and Ronda Nichols, of Belfast Meeting, gave us an anecdote about her family and prayer. "We have three small children and sometimes things just get out of hand, tempers flare, things are in a mess. At times like that, I try to take a little time to be quiet and pray about what our way out of this situation might be. The last time we got into this craziness together, it didn't occur to me to disengage. As things took a shift to calming down, I looked over to see my daughter sitting quietly, with her hands folded. When I asked her what was going on, she replied 'I'm praying, Mommy!' [Did you cry? I asked. "Of course!"]

Jeannette Baker of Evanston IL Monthly Meeting shared this in an FGC e-mail discussion about teaching prayer: "Sometimes we teach without knowing it. When I had a class of 5 to 8 year olds I tried to fold an origami crane. I had not practiced it at home as I would have instructed all teachers to do before trying such an activity. I started folding and got stuck and stopped and said in a low voice, "Oh God help me with this. I don't want to disappoint the children." And the next steps fell into place.

Soon my crane was ready to sit on the windowsill. Feeling more sure of myself I then tried again and got stuck at the same place and wondered out loud, "Why can't I do this?" and little 5 year old Joseph observed, "Jeanette, you didn't pray this time!" So I said "Thanks" and gave a short prayer and again all went smoothly.

Was I as surprised as anyone else around that round table of children? You bet I was. I do believe that God knows what we want before we ask for it."