

**Port Townsend Friends Meeting & NPYM Youth Committee**  
**Notes from an Adult Discussion on Children's Programs**  
**March 15, 2015**

notes compiled by Jay Thatcher, Annual Session Children's Program Coordinator

Katherine Spinner told a story from Godly Play about Abram and Sarai narrating the action unfolding in a box filled with sand. She opened the story to Friends by asking wondering questions.

After this, Katherine and Jay Thatcher opened the meeting for some wonderings, questions, comments and ideas from local Friends on children's programming.

About Godly Play, Friends said:

- I had Godly Play and Faith & Play figures and left them with Adelphi Meeting.
- I have a small sand tray.
- Get a large acrylic box from Michael's Crafts and some wooden figures. Keep a big bag of sand. Spread it out on a drop cloth.
- Godly Play is adaptable to all ages. I've done it with preschoolers and a toddler.
- If time is short, the children's response to a story can be offered on a subsequent week.
- Is there an equivalent to Godly Play in other faiths?
- Katherine noted that she doesn't look up from the story unfolding on the sand until the wondering questions. This way all can focus on the story. It was awkward to learn this skill of not looking at the faces of the listeners.

Looking forward to children's programming in Port Townsend, Friends offered these ideas:

- I wonder if we could visit South Seattle Friends Meeting. It's inspiring.
- We like to dress up. We could take on clothes and roles.
- Jumping Mouse, a preschool and a grade school are all here next to our meeting house. I wonder what we could make of that.
- Perhaps we could offer a lesson on midweek afternoons.
- How often are we thinking of offering Sunday school?
- The religious education program can grow in numbers if participants bring a friend.
- Planning carefully is important, so we can adjust. It was challenging to volunteer at annual session.
- Quaker kids can be gentle with each other. If we get it going, a group will motivate each other for good.
- That's what kept me alive as a youthful Friend.
- I like being included with all ages of Friends. When our meeting house was remade, we children knocked out the old walls.
- It irks me when someone ministers to children by talking down to them.
- I want to teach Quaker meditation to children. I've taught other stuff in Sunday school. I teach Buddhist meditation.

- Jay spoke briefly about the [\*Experiment with Light\*](#) which has recovered a Friends practice of personal meditation that had long been abandoned. Through workshops and publications, it has been adapted and developed to respond to contemporary needs. *Light to Live By*, the seminal book is in the meeting library.
- Katherine held up a copy of *The Worship Kit*, a book on this practice which is written for children.
- She told Friends about how the preschoolers at her meeting silently hold people in Light.

Several ideas were shared about interactions across generations of Friends:

- We like to dress up. We could take on clothes and roles.
- We have beaches nearby. We could go together.
- I have an urge to interact, play games and do fun stuff with adults, too.
- Adult volunteers at Quarterly Meeting children's programs are funny. They stand or sit still. Don't play. Watch.
- The group of kids determined much of the structure and program for my group at Quarterly Meeting.
- Jay invited Friends to come to *Active and Joyful*, a spiritual play-shop before annual session this summer.
- Community night at quarterly and yearly meetings includes remarkable inter-generational relationships.
- Children in the Friends Meeting of Washington, DC had their own monthly meeting to make basic decisions. The minutes were included with those of the whole body.

Jay invited Friends' simple presence with the children as the greatest gift we can bring to them. More than any curriculum or structure, how adult Friends relate to children provides a powerful message of respect and peace.

Katherine shared some of her collection of books that offer a chance for children to learn spiritually. One is *The Keeping Quilt* by Patricia Polacca, which could inspire a textile project. Other good books to share with Quaker kids include:

-*The Junkyard Wonders* by Patricia Polacca  
 -*Giving* by Shirley Hughes  
 -*Alfie and Annie Rose*  
 -*Obadiah* stories by Brinton Turkle  
 -*Butterflies Under Our Hats, God's Paintbrush, In God's Name, and God in Between* by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso

-*All of Me! In my Heart, and The Paper Crane* by Molly Bang  
 -*The Other Side, This is the Rope, Each Kindness* by Jacqueline Woodson  
 -*This Little Light of Mine* illustrated by E.B. Lewis