

Children's Religious Ed Notes

An E-letter from the Pacific Yearly Meeting Religious Education for Children Committee

#4: Autumn 2007: Lesson From a Book and Other FGC Resources

Editor's note: As a child, my central spiritual teachers were the authors of children's books, people like Frances Hodgson Burnett, author of The Secret Garden, who confirmed and strengthened in me a sense of the Magic and mystery of all things. When my children came along I rediscovered and shared with them my old favorites, and discovered with them many treasures that had come along in the intervening years. The joys of reading aloud drew in my husband as well—many wise children's books have as much to offer the grown-up reader as they do the child! I was delighted to discover FGC's new "Lesson From a Book" format, which makes it easy for almost any of us to share a beloved book with meeting children—and with each other!

Gail Eastwood, newsletter editor and PYM CRE co-clerk

Lesson From a Book

For years, many Pacific Yearly Meeting religious education committees have turned to Friends General Conference (FGC) for resources to make children's programs work in our typical situation of small numbers of children of various ages attending meeting irregularly. The latest concept and soon-to-grow resource from FGC is their "Lesson From a Book" lesson plan concept. This concept encourages us all to share our successful experiences sharing book stories with our meeting children. People from all meetings are invited to submit lesson plans based on children's books. After being vetted by the FGC Religious Ed Committee and FGC staff, lesson plans will be posted online.

The suggested form for the lesson plan developed by FGC includes a short synopsis of the story, the relationship of the book to Friends' testimonies, an opening, a suggestion of how to present the book, some discussion or "I wonder" questions, 2-3 possible activities, a song if possible, and a closing. To check out the format and a couple of sample ready-to-go "Lessons From a Book," go to the Autumn 2006 edition of the FGC religious education newsletter, *REsource*, online at <http://www.fgcquaker.org/library/teachingresources/> It looks like a great way for people in a meeting to share their favorites in the wonderful world of children's literature.

This edition of the FGC newsletter also includes an article with thoughts about choosing stories for First Day School, as well as an article with an intergenerational project for meetings: "*Helping our children to grow up to be committed, passionate Quakers requires finding concrete ways for intergenerational faith-sharing to occur. Creating a "Gifts of Faith" booklet is one way to encourage this sharing. This idea was originally suggested by Ellen McCambley, of Wellesley Meeting. She and her brothers and sisters were gathering prayers and words of spiritual support that had upheld them to give as a gift to all of the children in their family. They were creating a booklet of these treasured words. A First Day School can prepare a Gifts of Faith booklet as a meeting-wide project...*" See the online FGC newsletter for more.

What is Friends General Conference?

FGC is an association of fourteen yearly meetings and regional groups and nine directly-affiliated monthly meetings (including two Pacific Yearly Meeting monthly meetings) that serves

Quakers year-round with a vast array of programs and services. Of special interest to religious educators, FGC, in addition to their well-known annual gathering also offers conferences for religious educators, gatherings for youth and an outstanding online bookstore. Their religious education committee has representation from many yearly meetings, and develops curricula and resources for Quakers of all ages. These curricula have been widely appreciated and used in our monthly meetings. Check out their website to get a fuller understanding of their programs and services, www.fgcquaker.org.

Quiz: Which two Pacific Yearly Meeting monthly meetings are affiliated with FGC? (answer at bottom of newsletter)

Some Storybook Favorites

Susan Hopkins of Grass Valley Meeting, a present member of the PYM Religious Ed for Children Committee, and a corresponding member of the FGC Religious Ed Committee has a lifelong interest in teaching values to young children: teaching peace, teaching equality, teaching community. She has a delightful collection of hundreds of children's books. Here are three of her favorites:

- *Sam Johnson and the Blue Ribbon Quilt*, by Lisa Campbell Ernst. Sam was determined to be a quilter and a good one too! He and some other men made a quilt and took it to the county fair. What happened next brought the men and the women quilters all together in a most surprising way!
- *Night Boat to Freedom*, by Margot Theis Raven. This beautifully written story of a young slave boy helping others escape to freedom is rich and deep in its descriptions of the fear of escaping and of the love of family. Granny Judith says, "What scares the head is best done with the heart."
- *Enemy Pie*, by Derek Munson. In this funny, yet endearing story, one little boy learns an effective recipe for turning a best enemy into a best friend

Two Truths and a Lie: an Icebreaker Activity for All Ages

This game can be played with teams, or with each person playing alone against a group. Each person develops three statements about themselves, two of them true and one false. The others (or the other team) guesses which is the false one. How much do the children of your meeting know about the adults? How much do the adults know about the children? A great way to learn a little more about each other, and one that can offer some hilarious and surprising moments!

For more story resource ideas, browse the storybook shelves at your local library, or go to www.quakerbooks.org. Look at the adult books as well as the children's books; so many of the stories we need to share and sink deeper into are the same stories for people of all ages.

Quiz answer: Davis and Sacramento meetings are FGC affiliates.

Looking for resources? Have a concern you'd like to discuss? Have ideas or experiences you'd like to share? Want to subscribe? Email the newsletter editor, eastwood@sohum.com. The PYM Religious Education for Children Committee will respond to your concerns. Find past editions of this newsletter at www.pacificyearlymeeting.org.