

Looking Back, Looking Forward, and Being Present

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With thanks to Beth Collea, for language in her lesson on Silence as a Tool.

Materials:

- Medium-sized mixing bowl; unbreakable and clear if possible
- Blank paper cut into pieces which will fit easily into the bowl (blank index cards work well)
- Crayons, colored pencils, markers
- Stones and glass beads in their own baskets or containers
- *What Does It Mean to Be Present?* by Rana Diorio

Themes: Quaker Worship (unprogrammed, waiting worship), Community

Opening

Invite the children to sit in a circle with you and go around the circle making introductions. Welcome anyone new to the group.

Hand out two pieces of paper/index cards to each child, and ask them to write or draw:

- (1) something they want to remember from their summer
- (2) something they are looking forward to this year at meeting (or at home, school)

Invite anyone who would like to share with the group their summer memory and/or hope for the year. Let this be voluntary, and encourage listening to one another.

Exploring the idea of Gathering in the Meeting

Italicized words are for the adult facilitator to share. They are meant as a guide, and you may find your own way to express their meaning —

In our Quaker meeting community, we help each other to hold our memories and hopes, joys and sorrows, big feelings and wonderings by worshipping and serving together.



Bring out the bowl. Hold it up and touch the inside surface and the outside surface.

Our community gathered for meeting for worship is like this bowl. When we come to meeting, all Friends add their inner listening to the silence together. It is a very strong vessel!

We are waiting, and listening, in the silence. In the silence, all our experiences, feelings, needs, and hopes are held in the Light. None is bigger than another, or more important.

Meeting for worship has room to hold our whole selves, all of us, in Light and love.

Let's add our memories from the past and hopes for the future to the bowl. They are both part of who we are in the present.

Invite the children to fold their papers and add them to the bowl in the center of the circle, or while passing it around the circle.

***[see “Another Choice,” below]**

We can also put any strong feelings or problems or big questions into the bowl. I'm going to pass around a basket of stones. Stones are sometimes heavy, and problems and questions can feel heavy. If you would like to add a stone to the bowl, you may. It might represent something for you today, or just be a reminder that we can bring this part of our selves to worship, too.

Pass around basket of stones. Children do not need to add one, only as they are led, while in the silence you're holding as a group.

In worship, we invite the Light, the divine presence of God, to work on everything we bring and put into the vessel of our worship. We each bring more of the Light when we gather.

Pass around a basket or box of the clear glass beads; invite the children to add “Light” to the bowl.

The bowl is like the strong, open, prepared space in meeting for worship, where we bring who we are and who we hope to be, including our joys and challenges, to hold in community as we listen together for God.

Afterward

Make space for the children to share their ideas from those last two additions to the bowl — if they choose to do so. This is like joys and sorrows at the end of worship.

What is on your heart? What is heavy? Where is the Light?

Take the bowl into the worship space with you, settle it somewhere in the room, and share at the rise of meeting if this is your practice.



***Another choice: “What Does It Mean to Be Present?”**
(after add memories/hopes to the bowl)

We've looked back, and forward — we bring our memories and our hopes into the silence of worship, and with us to this community — But I wonder what it means to be present?

Read the story, showing the illustrations. Take your time.

Wonder Together (after the story):

“I wonder what part of the story you liked best?”

“I wonder if you could find yourself in the story?”

“I wonder if there was a part we could leave out and have all the story we need?”

Being Present Together

Give the children each a third paper/card, and invite them to write or draw on it how they are feeling right now, in this moment. Invite them to pay attention:

Let's settle into silence in our circle, and pay attention to how it feels. Listen inside, and write or draw what you are feeling.

Add the third pieces of paper to the bowl. Settle back into silence for a few minutes.

Afterward

Make space for the children to share anything they wanted to from those last additions to the bowl — if they choose to do so. This is like joys and sorrows at the end of worship. *What is on your heart?*

Take the bowl into meeting with you, settle it somewhere in the room, and explain at the rise of meeting.