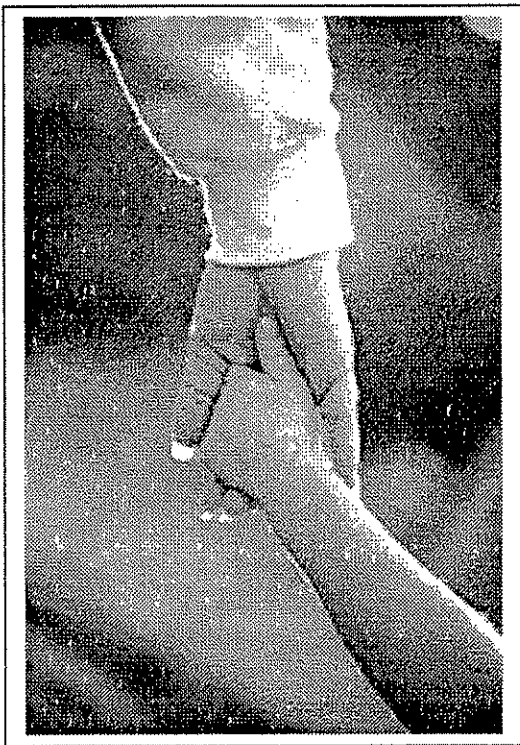


# God Is...

A Curriculum for  
Kg through Adults  
(Lessons for all ages to assist in  
exploring their Quaker faith)



Created by  
Children & Young People at  
Yearly Meeting Group

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# God Is...

## Introduction

This is the first of two lessons which have been created by the Children and Young People at Yearly Meeting (CYPYM, formerly CYASG) for the purpose of challenging Quaker children and youth to think about what they believe about God. The CYPYM group members are: Lynn Oberfield, Sallie Jones, Claire Wilson, Pam Moench, and John Kelly. The Lesson can be taught in two weeks.

The first lesson, in two parts, entitled "What Do Quakers Believe About God"? is designed to create dialogue between children and older Friends in your Meeting so that children can hear what older Friends believe and older Friends can hear what children and young people are thinking. Children and youth want to know what their parents and others believe so that they can have a springboard from which to form their own beliefs. Part A of Lesson I contains background information on what Quakers believe; the reinforcing questions and activities are grouped according to ages: adult, high school, middle school, upper elementary, elementary or early elementary. Part B, "What Do Friends in My Meeting Believe?" asks young people to actively engage older Friends in their meeting to talk about what they believe. Both parts of Lesson I can take two weeks to teach.

The second lesson, "What Is Your Experience of God?" contains several suggestions for activities or stories to use at different age levels and can be completed in one week.

It is the hope of CYPYM that these lessons will spur First-day children to come to the March 23-26 sessions at Arch Street Meeting House to meet with Quaker children in the Delaware Valley and with adults who are forming and articulating their Quaker faith.

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## Lesson I. What Do Quakers Believe About God?

### Part A. Written Material and Literature

#### For Older Teens and Adults

The "*Friends and God*" pamphlet (enclosed) can be used to stimulate the thinking of older teens and adults or to strengthen their own understanding about Quakerism.

For the teacher to think about: More than half of the membership of Philadelphia have joined the Society of Friends "later" in life, having come from other religious traditions, to a place where they could be free to sort out their own beliefs.

#### *Questions to discuss:*

- ❖ What did you learn about Quaker faith which is new to you?
- ❖ What is the central point of Quakerism that you would like to convey to the younger people in your meeting?
- ❖ How have the messages and experiences of other Friends affected your beliefs and challenged you to move forward in your own spiritual journey?

#### For High School

#### *"Faith and Practice" Quotes:*

Choose one or more of the quotes from PYM *Faith and Practice* (1997) which follow to read aloud. You may then ask a question or two to spark discussion.

#### 1) *Light of Christ Within*

On page 88, William Penn speaks of the personal God, "the light of Christ within" that each of us must seek on our own in a disciplined manner in order to know "Truth" and "to take us out of darkness into God's marvelous light".



*If you would know God, and worship and serve God as you should do, you must come to the means He has ordained and given for that purpose. Some seek it in books, some in learned men, but what they look for is in themselves, yet they overlook it. The voice is too still, the Seed too small, and the Light shineth in darkness... The woman that lost her silver found it at home after she had lighted her candle and swept her house. Do you so too, and you shall find what Pilate wanted to know, viz., Truth. The Light of Christ within, who is the Light of the world, and so a light to you that tells you the truth of your condition, leads all that take heed unto it out of darkness into God's marvelous light; for light grows upon the obedient.*

William Penn, 1694

Questions:

William Penn uses the example of the woman who has lost her silver and does not find it until she lights a candle and sweeps her own house.

- ❖ How does this metaphor describe how each of us comes to know God?
- ❖ Under what conditions is a person more likely to experience God in their lives?

2) *Continuing Revelation*

Rufus Jones is quoted on page 91, "If God ever spoke, He is still speaking..."

*If God ever spoke, He is still speaking. If He has ever been in mutual and reciprocal communication with the persons He has made, He is still a communicating God as eager as ever to have listening and receptive souls. If there is something of His image and superscription in our inmost structure and being, we ought to expect a continuous revelation of His will and purpose through the ages... He is the Great I Am, not a Great He Was.*

Rufus M. Jones, 1948

Questions:

The Bible is a record of human interaction with God which happened a long time ago.

- ❖ Why do we need to become familiar with a God who spoke to people in such a different time and place?
- ❖ What evidence is there that God still speaks to people?
- ❖ Has God ever spoken to you?

3) *Science and Faith*

On page 93, astronomer Jocelyn Burnell shares her view of how a person can work in a scientific field where proof is a foundation for new discovery and yet still be comfortable with a personal, unproven concept of God and the need for her own spiritual journey.



*As a teenager I looked for proof of the existence of God, but soon realised that there would be none. I chose to adopt as a working hypothesis a belief in God, and to go on from there. I have not felt the need to revise that hypothesis – yet. I believe in a powerful, all-knowing God, but a caring and a forgiving God. I believe he says to us: "All right, you've got life, get on with it, live it! I am there behind to guide you, to help you live it; but don't expect me to interfere to make life smooth for you – you are old enough to stand on your own two feet."*

*From what I have learnt as an astronomer I believe that the Universe evolved itself without any active participation from God,*

and it seems reasonable to me that the world continues, at least on a grand scale, to evolve by itself – that God does not directly interfere with the running of the world; but that he does through people and their attitudes....

I believe that we are God's agents in this world and that he may require things of us. A lot of my effort goes into trying to understand what God expects of me. I do this by trying to maintain an orientation towards God – to live my life in the spirit – to bring my whole life under the ordering of the spirit of Christ – to acknowledge my discipleship.

S. Jocelyn Burnell, 1976

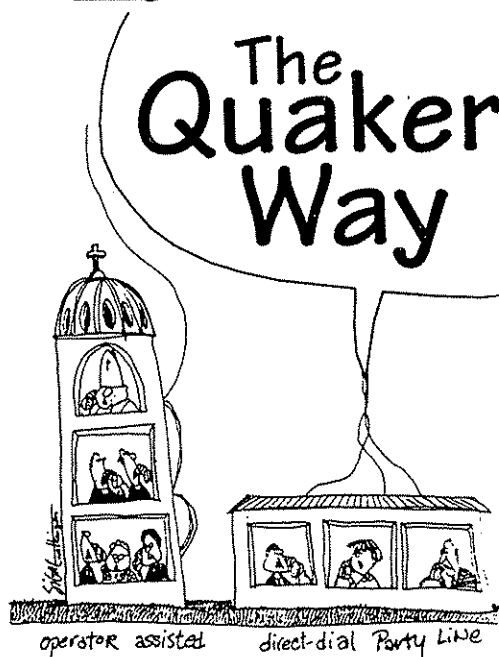
Questions:

- ❖ What is your concept of God?
- ❖ Where and when did an idea of God first appear in your life, and how has your concept deepened or developed since then?
- ❖ Do you think God was the prime mover in the universe?

For Upper Elementary and Middle School

"The Quaker Way" Quotes

Background for the teacher: The following ideas about what Friends believe come



from a neat little book called *The Quaker Way* which can be borrowed from the PYM Library (1-800-220-0796, #7220) or purchased from the FGC Bookstore (1-800-966-4556). The book was published by Australia Yearly Meeting in 1958, but it was revised and updated by Friends General Conference in 1998. The book works quite well as a starting place for what Friends believe and how they practice their faith. Before a discussion on what Friends believe about God, it would be good reading for Middle schoolers and high schoolers and even adults new to Meeting.

The Society of Friends does not have an official creed which all members must accept, but if one were to ask a large group of Friends what they believe about God, one might find among the responses the following ideas, none of which would be considered the complete or final answer. Each Friend will express his or her belief in a unique way based on their experience of life, worship, study, and discussion with other

Friends. Our beliefs grow and change, become richer and deeper, the more we seek to know God's will; this is our spiritual journey.

Revised and updated by Friends General Conference  
Religious Education Committee  
from a 1958 publication of the Education Committee  
of the General Meeting for Australia  
of the Religious Society of Friends  
illustrated by Signe Wilkins

Students can locate quotes which follow in the *The Quaker Way* (FGC, 1998) and then read aloud, or the quotes can be photocopied and handed out to First-day students to read aloud, one at a time.

1. "There is that of God in everyone" – George Fox (p. 3)
2. "Because the 'inner light' of Christ is within each of us, we can find God and speak to God without the help of a priest or minister. True religion is a personal experience." – George Fox (p. 3)
3. "God is always revealing new truths to us or showing us truth in a new way. (This is why Friends do not have a creed)". (p. 7)
4. "The proof of our belief lies in our own and other's experience of God and the way we reflect it and test it in our lives." (p. 8)
5. "God is the great spirit who made the universe and is still making it. Because each one of us has a part of God's spirit, we can see what is beautiful, true and good in the world and in other people." (p. 8)
6. Some people – because they have followed the spirit within them more carefully, and given more time and thought to the search for truth – have come very close to God. Among them are the great teachers and healers such as Buddha, Isaiah, Mohammed, Julian of Norwich, Gandhi, and Mother Teresa. These spiritual leaders from all over the world had one thing in common: the inner light of the spirit burned so strongly in them that it lit a way to truth, not only for themselves but for thousands of people who came after them." (p. 9)
7. Many Friends believe the greatest of these teachers was Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus wanted us to worship God who sent him, but God's love and purpose are so clearly shown in the life and teachings of Jesus, that if we follow him, we also follow God". (p. 10)

After reading or hearing the quotes, list on a flip chart or a blackboard the basic beliefs of Quakers, as the young people see them.

*Questions:*

- ❖ If you are trying to explain Quakersim to another person, what do you say?
- ❖ Which part of Friends' beliefs do you find the easiest to understand?
- ❖ Which part is the hardest?

**For Upper Elementary Ages**

Read "The Man Who Wouldn't Go To Church" in *George Fox, the Man Who Wouldn't* by Sophia Lyon Fahs, FGC, 1971, available from PYM Library or FGC Bookstore. This chapter tells of George Fox's search to find what God is and where He could be found.

*Questions:*

- ❖ When George Fox was young, what bothered him a lot when he went to church with his parents?
- ❖ How did Quakers get their name?
- ❖ Why did Quakers get thrown in prison?
- ❖ Why would George Fox not accept a pardon from the King?

*Activities:*

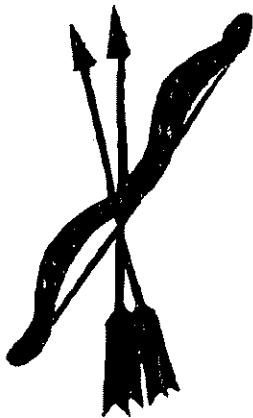
- Color the picture "George Fox - the Presence in the Midst" from *Color Me Quaker*, published by Friends United Meeting and available from FGC.\*
- Follow the maze in which George wandered to find God (the maze is at the end of the lesson).

\*From: *George Fox: Four Lessons*, published by PYM Religious Education Committee, 1995, and available from FGC.

**For Elementary Ages**

Choose one of the four stories which follow, which illustrate a testimony of Friends. The first three: *Arrow Over the Door*, *Fierce Feathers* and *Feather of Peace* explain the Quaker faith and talk about the peace testimony. The last story, *Thee Hannah* emphasizes the Quaker testimony of simplicity.

Background for the teacher: The Quaker peace testimony has its roots in the fundamental belief that there is that of God or the Divine Spark in every human being. Since all human beings are children of God, Friends are called to love and respect all persons and to overcome evil with good. Early Friends recognized both good and evil in human beings, but felt that each person had the capacity to know God's will for us directly, and to see the example of Jesus' love for all humankind, including our "enemies". George Fox saw the power of Christ working in our hearts as an ocean of light overcoming an ocean of darkness, and from this vision the Friends' peace testimony arose.



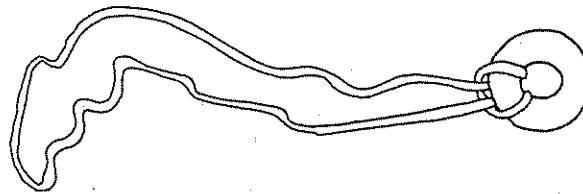
1) *Arrow Over the Door* by Joseph Bruchac (Dial Books for Young People, NY, 1998), available on loan from the PYM Library (1-800-221-7220) or for purchase from FGC Bookstore (1-800-966-4556). The book, which is about 80 pages, can be read aloud over three weeks. The story can also be read from a summary which you will find at the end of the lesson or told in a lively manner.

The story *Arrow Over the Door* is about two boys of similar age who come from extremely different backgrounds and see the world in very different ways. One is Samuel Russell, a Quaker, raised to believe in non-violence; the other is Stands Straight, an Abenaki Indian scout, who believes all Americans are his enemies because they killed his mother and brother. Samuel's family lives in constant danger of attack by hostile Indians. Other boys and men leave the community to fight for their homeland, while Samuel is called a coward for sticking to his family's beliefs. The two boys meet at the suspenseful climax of the story, and the resolution shows it takes more courage to be peaceful than it does to wage war.

- As you read or tell the story, stop to talk about the feelings of the two boys.
- Review the description of the "eye stone" in the story
- For what did Stands Straight use the "eye stone"?
- At the conclusion of the story, talk about how the religious beliefs of the Russell family are very similar to those of the Stands Straight people.

*Activity:*

Using Sculpey™ clay (found in most craft stores), have each child make a hollow stone, like the one found and treasured by Stands Straight. Following the directions on the Sculpey™ package, bake the stone rings in an oven (toaster oven works for a small class). When cool, tie a thick, silky cord to each ring and have the children wear them around their necks. They can practice looking through the hole at one person or thing at a time as Stands Straight did. The children might want to share a very brief retelling of the story with the adults at Meeting and show how the stone ring works.



2) "Feather of Peace" - a story in *Lighting Candles in the Dark*, Friends General Conference, Religious Education Committee, 1992.

Background for the teacher: The Quakers believed in living peacefully with the Indians, even after their neighbors fled in fear. They worshipped with their doors open which was a sign to the Indians that they were welcome. You may read the story aloud or tell it to the children after you have read it.

*Questions:*

- ❖ When the Indians appeared at the door during worship, what did the little boy do?



- ❖ Have you ever been afraid that someone would hurt you? What did you do?
- ❖ What were the Indians ready to do when they came to the Meetinghouse?
- ❖ How were their minds changed?
- ❖ What is the significance of the white feather?
- ❖ In the story, Robert Nisbet says, "The beloved God shall dwell in safety and He shall cover you with his feathers all day long..." Can you close your eyes and imagine what that would feel like?

*Activities:*

- *Focus on Feathers*

Give each child a feather to examine. Feathers are available at most craft or art supply stores. Ask them to describe the parts of the feather. Use a land lens. Give them a flight feather and a down feather. Examine the difference. Have them gently pull the barbs apart and "zip them up".

Flight feathers have a central hollow shaft running the whole length and webs on two opposite sides which present a lightweight yet solid surface for flight.

Down feathers have a short shaft and many non-interlocking barbs for insulation.

Small songbirds may have 5,000 feathers while waterfowl, which must stay warm in cold water, have up to 12,000 feathers. Each bird is uniquely adapted to survive.

Ask the children about the uses which people make of feathers, why they would be a symbol of peace? Make a quill pen. Write messages about peace or write a message to someone in the Meeting.

William Penn's Indian name was ONAS which meant quill pen. Talk about William Penn and the Indians.\*



\*From: *Hands-On Nature* by Jenepher Lingelbach. Published by Vermont Institute of Natural Science

- *Feather Cloak* – talk about the quote from *Feathers of Peace*: “And he shall cover you with feathers all the day long.” Make a cloak of feathers, for each child to wear on their shoulders. Using the feather pattern at the end of Lesson I, ask children to draw around and cut out feathers from different colors of construction paper. Then write on each feather something which God does to make them feel safe. Punch a hole in the stem end of the feather and string them on narrow gift ribbon.



- 3) “Fierce Feathers” in *Quaker Book of Saints*, by L.V. Hodgkin, Friends Home Service Committee, London, 1949. Available from PYM Library.

Background for the teacher: This story is very similar to the “Feather of Peace”, although much longer. Two additional facts about the incident: 1) Quaker settlements were established in a neutral zone along the Hudson river in New York in 1775, to keep the Dutch and English from fighting with one another; 2) the Hoxie’s invited the Indians to their home for a meal after Meeting.

*Questions and Activities* (the same questions and activities which are suggested for the previous story can be used for this story).

- 4) *Thee Hannah*, by Marguerite de Angeli is available from PYM Library (1-800-220-0796) or from FGC Bookstore (1-800-966-4556).

*Thee Hannah* tells how difficult it was for Hannah, a strong-willed and imaginative Quaker girl living in the mid 1800’s, to live up to her parent’s testimony of simplicity.

#### For Early Elementary

- 1) *The Adventures of Obadiah* by Brinton Turtle, Viking Press. Available from PYM Library. This is a delightful story of Obadiah, a young Quaker boy and his challenge to tell the truth.



Background for the teacher: Before telling the story, ask children what making up a story means. Do they know the difference between imagining and telling the truth? What does a person mean when he or she says “I was just joking”? Give some examples of storytelling, lying and telling the truth. Since making

up stories and lying are not necessarily the same thing, try to explain the difference. Point out that Quakers think truth-telling is very important.

Read the story, being sure to show all the pictures. Give children a chance to comment on the setting. Have they been to fairs? Have they ever seen horse-drawn wagons? Talk about what sheep shearing is. If possible, have some wool to show the children.

*Questions:*

- ❖ Have you ever had a problem like Obadiah's? Tell us about it.
- ❖ What can you do to avoid having such a problem?
- ❖ Why do you think Obadiah's parents and teacher wanted him to learn to tell the truth?
- ❖ Is telling the truth important to you?
- ❖ Ask if the children know the story of "The Boy Who Cried Wolf". Ask a child to retell it or tell it yourself.

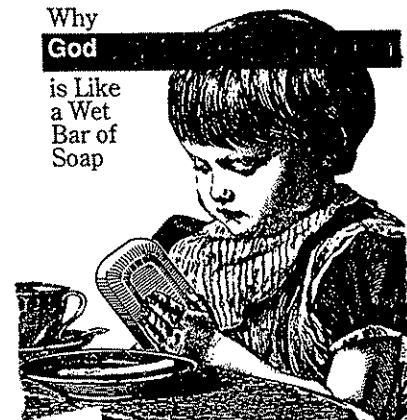
*Activity:*

Ram and Sheep - Give each child a copy of the ram and sheep pictures in the book. Children glue cotton onto the ram and sheep to make "wool". They can also color the hooves, face, and legs. The ram can be a reminder to tell the truth.\*

\*This lesson is taken from *Obadiah: Four Lessons*, PYM Religious Education Committee

2) *Why God is Like a Wet Bar of Soap* by Chuck Fager, available from PYM Library and available for sale from FGC Bookstore.

Background: This book can be read aloud and is written from a Quaker's point of view. Several biblical quotes are intended to give us many ideas of what God is like. God is like a wet bar of soap because the closer one gets to know what God is, the more awesome He becomes and the harder one must try to understand God. Before beginning to read, ask the children to listen very carefully for: (1) what God looks like, (2) what He acts like, and (3) names God is given in the Bible.



by Chuck Fager

*Activities:*

- When you are finished reading the story, give the children markers or crayons and drawing paper and ask them to draw the answers to the three questions. Younger children may only be able to answer question #1.
- Older children can look up the biblical passages mentioned in the book.

## Part B - What Do Friends in My Meeting Believe?

The second part of the first lesson will give children a fairly complete picture of what Friends believe about God, by bringing children and youth together with adults in your Meeting.

### *Activities:*

You need choose only one of the following activities which are appropriate for Kg-High School level.

1. Memorable Messages: Ask the children or young people which messages spoken in Meeting have stayed with them. [This has to do with what others believe based on what they say in Meeting.] Children can answer this question individually or it can be raised in a worship-sharing format.
2. Interviews: Before Meeting or during the social hour, children can interview teens or adults asking these four questions:
  - What is your image of God?
  - God is like...
  - I know that God exists when...
  - I see God in...

The children can then give a unique sticker to each person interviewed. Back in the First-day class children can: (a) read the answers they got and talk about them, or, (b) make pictures of the different responses. The teacher might ask a poet to work with the class to encapsulate all of the images or responses about God into a poem.

3. Quaker Panel of Experts. The class prepares questions about God (like those in #2) or about Quakerism and asks three or four teens or adults to visit their class and answer the questions in turn.
4. Framed Responses. Ask the First-day students to create a frame for a large piece of paper or several smaller ones on which the adults, over two or three weeks, can draw or write responses to these questions:
  - What does God look like?
  - What is your image of God?Ideas for making frames are at the end of this lesson.
5. Triad Creations: Ask a child, a teen, and an adult in your Meeting to work together to create an image or picture of God using markers, crayons, paint or clay.

6. Small Group Sharing: Organize four people of different ages into a group. Choose children, teens or adults who come to these questions from different perspectives:

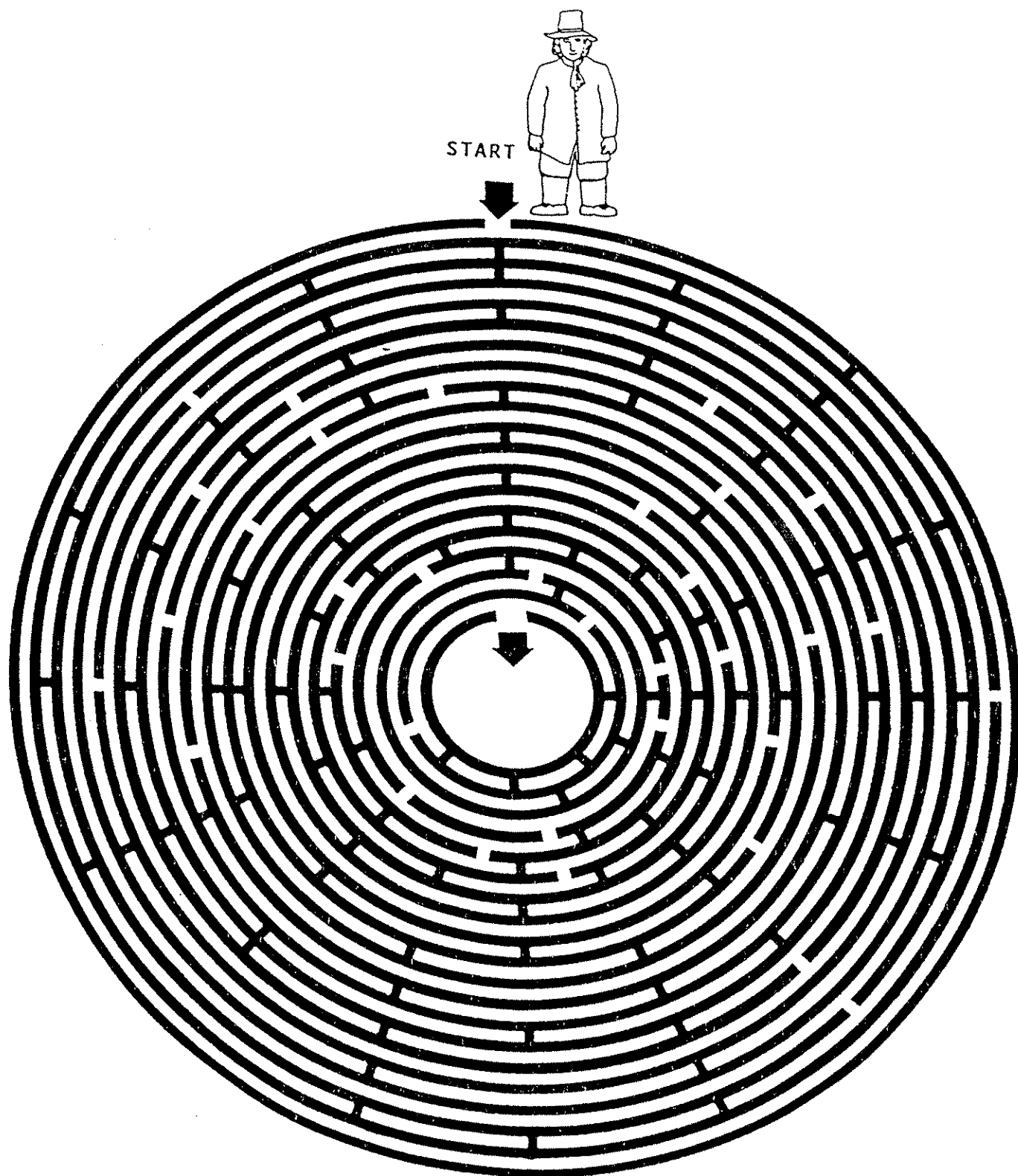
- What do you think Quakerism is?
- How do you experience God?

With a skillful facilitator, let each person in the group answer each question, especially allowing space for the child or teen to respond.

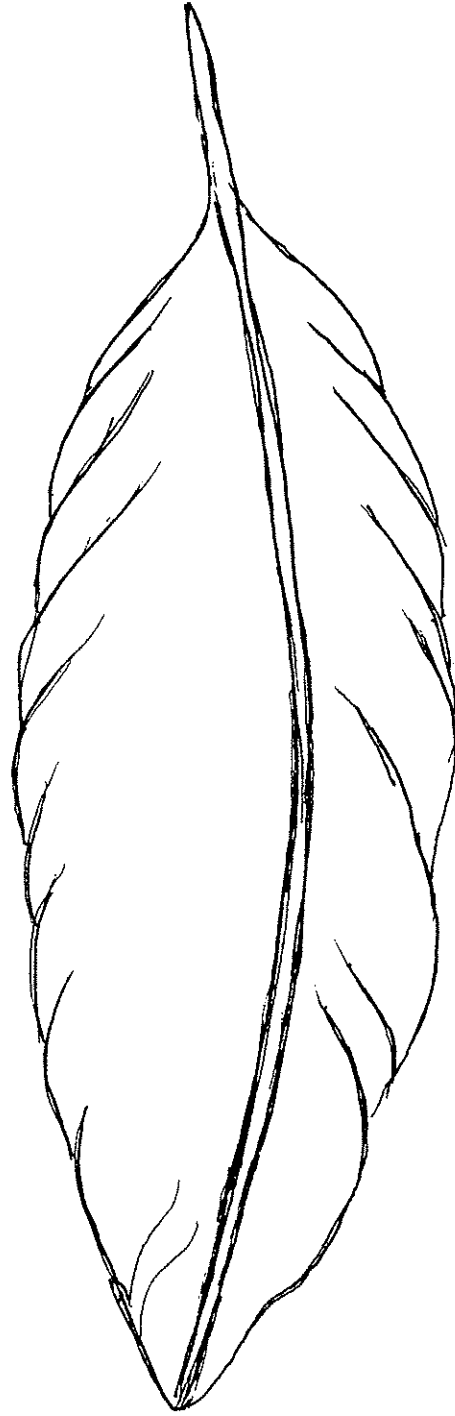
On First-day morning, perhaps the whole Meeting community can be organized into groups of four, so all Friends will be working on the same questions at the same time.

## Help George Fox Get Centered

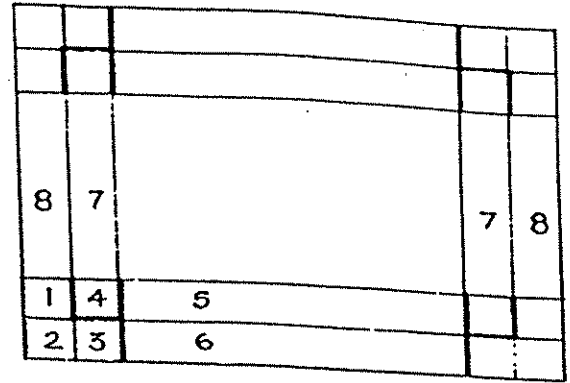
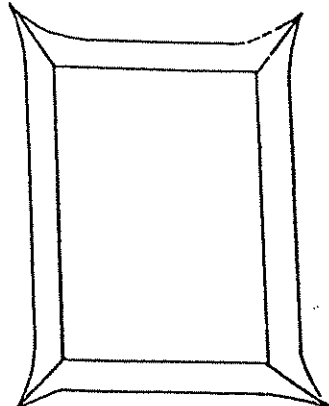
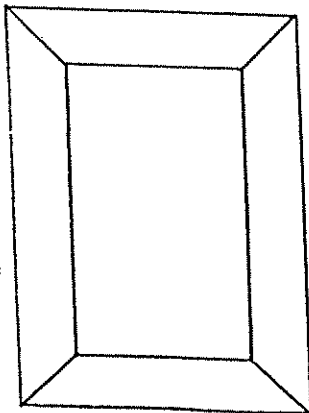
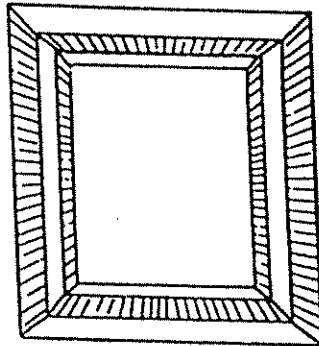
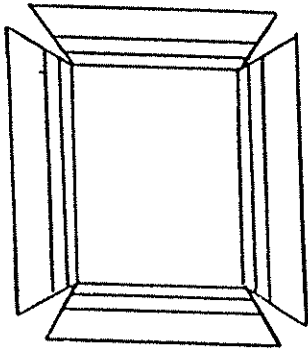
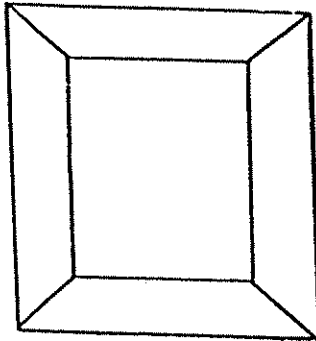
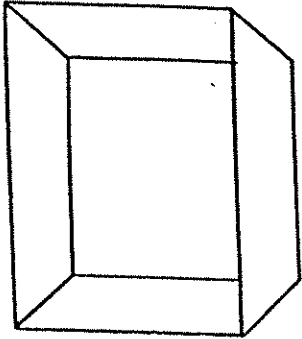
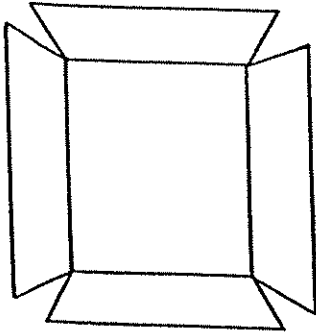
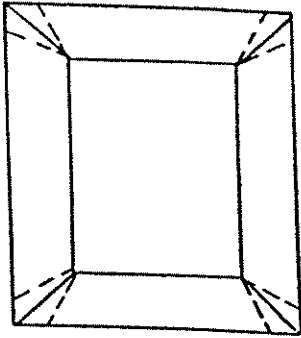
George spent two years wandering from place to place looking for God. Can you help George get to the center of things? This is a hard, hard, maze; so take your time.



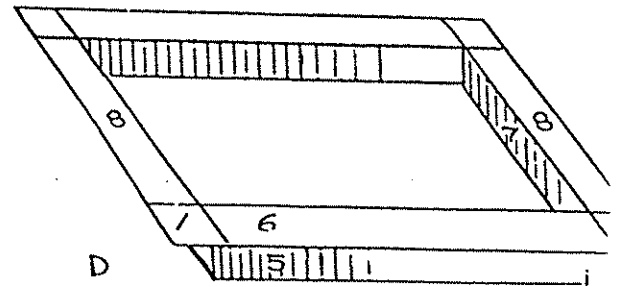
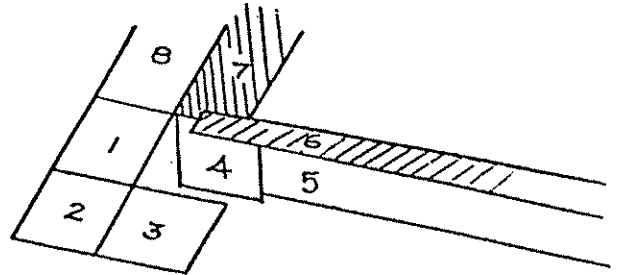
# Pattern for Feather Cloak



# FRAMES



Crease all lines. Cut heavy lines. Fold 5 upward. Fold 4 around 5. Fold 2 and 3 so that 2 is under 1 and 3 is under 6. Use paste to hold. Do the same at the other three corners.



Paper frames are effective backgrounds for three-dimensional structures as well as for flat compositions. They can be constructed very simply by cutting out the corners or by pinching them together. In diagram A a triangle shape is cut from each corner and the edges are taped together. This frame can be used either front or back. A frame with several scored and creased lines is shown in diagram B. All lines in diagram C are creased or scored and the corners are pinched together. Another frame is explained in diagram D.



## A Retelling of *The Arrow Over the Door*

by Joseph Bruchac

This story is about two boys from very different cultures. One is Indian; one is white. The story takes place in a frontier settlement called Saratoga in northern New York, during the late summer of 1777. This is the time of the War for Independence, also called the American Revolution, when the American colonies are struggling for freedom from British rule of King George. The setting is the wilderness, which until recently has been the home of Native Americans. White settlers have moved into the area and have forced the Indians out. The settlers live in log cabins in a time before electricity and running water. They hunt wild animals, they fish, and they farm. It is a time of uncertainty. Some neighbors in the Saratoga area wish for independence from British rule, others want to remain loyal to the powerful English government. The British have sent soldiers to the colonies to enforce their rule, and they have asked the Indians to help them. There has been much fighting between the Indians and the settlers. Neither group trusts the other, and there is much anger and fear. Some of the settlers in Saratoga are Quakers. They are neutral. They do not take part in the fighting but look for a peaceful resolution to the problems. The Quakers believe that all people are the children of God and that the Indians are no different from other people.

The Indian boy in this story is named Stands Straight. He is 14 and lives in an Indian settlement in Canada with his aunt and uncle. A French priest has established a church in the Indian community, and Stands Straight can speak French as well as his native language. When he was much younger, his father died of an illness. When he was 12, his mother and younger brother were killed while they were on a trading trip to another village. The village was attacked by an angry mob of Americans seeking revenge on any Indians they could find. The British have asked some of the men from Stands Straight's village to come to New York to join them in fighting to remove the white settlers. The Indians are not sure they will fight, but they have agreed to act as scouts for the soldiers. Stands Straight, his uncle, and several others, including two Frenchmen, form the scouting party.

The white boy in the story is named Samuel Russell. He is also 14. He and his father and mother and younger brother Jonathan live in Saratoga. He has lost five younger siblings to whooping cough and fever. The Russell family are a minority in Saratoga. They are Quakers and do not carry guns, except to hunt food. Some of Samuel's friends are not Quakers. They are leaving the settlement to join the American troops, and they tell Samuel he is a coward for not joining them. Samuel is afraid for his family's safety because he has just heard of an Indian massacre nearby and because British troops are known to be fighting rebel colonists in the area.

The two boys are alike in that they both feel unsure about what they should do during these troubled times. When Samuel wants some solitude, he goes to a brook in the woods and sits by a quiet pool to think about his problems. He also goes to Quaker Meeting where he listens to messages about the peace that comes when the Spirit of God dwells within. At home his parents patiently remind Samuel that fighting is not the Quaker way and that they must love their enemies. They must "walk in peace, and trust that others will see the Light within themselves."

Like Samuel, Stands Straight is not sure what to do. Even though it was angry whites who killed his mother and brother, he does not feel the need for revenge. He does not think it is wise for the Indians to become involved in this white man's war, but he has been told by the British that the rebel colonists hate the Indians and will not leave them alone. Whenever things

seem too confusing for Stands Straight, he reaches for an unusual stone kept in a leather pouch he wears. The stone is smooth and round. It is the color of the sky and has a hole through the middle. Stands Straight found the stone at the bottom of a deep pool of water. He calls this special stone his "eye stone." By looking through the small hole, he can focus on one thing or person at a time, and that helps Stands Straight to see to the heart of things. The Indian boy finds he can "see the spirit that trembles in everything" when he looks when he looks at something through the hole in the center of the "eye stone." Stands Straight also takes time each day to pray to his god, giving thanks and asking for help to see the right road to follow.

The climax of the story comes when Stands Straight and the scouting party hide in the woods and watch the unsuspecting Quaker residents of Saratoga going to Meeting for Worship. It is possible that the Indians will attack the white people. Samuel is very uneasy that morning, and he clutches a heavy stick as a crutch for his sprained ankle (but also for a weapon, if he should need it) as he walks to Meeting. He and his family leave their cabin unlocked and make their way through the woods to the Meetinghouse. There is to be a visitor at Meeting today. The Indians watch silently and, looking through the "eye stone," Stands Straight notices that no one carries a gun. He wonders why all these white people are gathering in one place. The people do not look like strong fighters; they do not look like warriors at all. Stands Straight imagines for a moment that Samuel and Jonathan could be his brothers. After the last Meeting member enters the Meetinghouse, the door is left ajar. In Stands Straight's culture, an open door is a sign of welcome. This seems curious to Stands Straight. It suggests the white people in the building are not afraid.

Inside the cabin, the Quakers settle into the silence of Meeting for Worship, all except Samuel who is feeling anxious. He feels that he and his family are in danger. He worries that he might not have the courage to protect his family from an attack. One person, the visitor, stands and shares a message about how "those who love God shall dwell in safety by Him." Outside the cabin, Stands Straight's uncle comes out of the woods into an open area close enough to the cabin to be seen by anyone who looks through one of the spaces between the logs of the cabin walls. The uncle is very tall, his face is painted, he holds a bow and arrow at his side, and he wears two very long feathers sticking straight up out of a band around his head. Looking through the "eye stone" at the opening in the log wall, Stands Straight can see that Samuel is looking right at his uncle. Samuel's eyes are wide with terror. Stands Straight expects the boy to shout in alarm and for guns to appear, but all remains silent in the Meetinghouse.

Inside the Meetinghouse, Samuel grabs his father's sleeve and silently mouths the word "Indian" over and over again. His mother touches his lips to keep him from speaking. In fear Samuel grabs his stout stick. His father reaches over and grasps Samuel's wrist to keep him from moving. He knows Samuel is upset about something, but he does not want to disrupt Meeting. Suddenly, there is a creak, and the door of the opens wide.

Outside the Meetinghouse at the edge of the woods, Stands Straight's uncle has motioned for all in the scouting party to follow him across the clearing to the building. Stands Straight thinks his uncle is very brave. The uncle steps calmly through the open door into the Meetinghouse. No one shouts. No one moves. Stands Straight positions himself in the doorway and looks through his "eye stone" at the faces of Samuel and his family. They return his look. At first Samuel is afraid, but when the Indian boy continues to look at him, as if trying to understand him, Samuel feels his fear leave his heart. He puts his stick down on the ground.

As Stands Straight watches the room of silent whites, he realizes from relaxed posture and calm faces that a practice he is familiar with is going on ... it is quiet because the whites are listening inwardly for the voice of their Creator, who speaks through the heart. Finally, the white visitor looks up and speaks the Indian word for "friend" to Stands Straight's uncle. The uncle returns the greeting. The visitor stands, smiles, and extends his hand in friendship, which the uncle takes. The visitor introduces himself in French and welcomes the scouting party. The uncle asks if there are weapons here. The visitor answers, "No, here are the people of peace," and he invites the Indians to join them as they return to the silence. The Indians put their weapons outside the cabin and find places to sit among the Quakers. After a while, someone ends the Meeting with a handshake. Samuel timidly takes the hand of Stands Straight when it is offered.

Soon everyone is invited to a Meeting member's home to eat. As the people file out of the Meetinghouse, Stands Straight walks between Samuel and Jonathan. He places a hand on Jonathan and Samuel's shoulders and repeats the Indian word for "friend." Jonathan is obviously pleased, but Samuel does not know what to say. At lunch, Samuel serves Stands Straight the meal of bread and cheese. Stands Straight thanks Samuel and speaks to him. The visitor to Meeting once lived with Indians and he knows this dialect, as well as French, and he translates Stands Straight's words for Samuel. Samuel smiles in response to Stands Straight's pledge of friendship.

After the meal, Stands Straight's uncle asks the visitor for a hammer and two nails. He leads the group of Indians and whites back to the Meetinghouse. Speaking in French, which the visitor can more easily translate, the uncle explains that his scouting party had been sent by the British to make war on the Americans, but that they had first chosen to see what kind of people the whites were. Witnessing the Quakers in Meeting for Worship, in a building with an open door and with no weapons about them, the Indians have no feelings of hostility. They know they will not take the side of King George. They will not enter the white man's war. They will take the side of peace and return to their own people in Canada.

Then the uncle holds up one of his arrows, breaks off the arrowhead and drops it in his pouch. He drives two nails into the wall over the door to the Meetinghouse and sets the arrow over the door on the nails. Through the translator, the uncle explains that this arrow is a sign among his people that the Quakers, who use this building, are a people of peace and will be left alone by his people.

Before the Indians leave, Stands Straight lets Samuel look through his "eye stone." With the cool stone against his cheek, Samuel studies the people gathered around, his parents, the wide valley, and the mountains beyond. He realizes he is not a coward. He knows this as if he were looking through his own heart. Stands Straight removes the stone from Samuel's hand. He points to his eye and his then his heart. Samuel repeats the gesture himself in understanding. The boys shake hands and each repeats the Indian word for friend. As Stands Straight and the rest of the scouting party leave and head north following the uncle, Samuel makes a ring of his thumb and forefinger. He looks at the arrow over the Meetinghouse, door and then watches the Indians until they disappear from sight.

## Lesson II: What Is Your Experience of God?

*"You will say, Christ saith this, and the apostles say this, but what canst thou say! Art thou a child of Light and has walked in the Light, and what thou speakest is it inwardly from God!"*

George Fox (Faith and Practice, p. 129)

This lesson is designed to challenge young people to think about their Quaker faith and what they believe about God. Even the youngest children have thoughts about God and are able to express them either in words or through another media.

*I love these little people, and it is not a slight thing when they who are so fresh from God, love us.*

Charles Dickens

### For All Ages

**Yarn Toss:** This activity can be done with children as soon as they can catch, and with older children and adults.

Form a circle and toss a ball of yarn across the circle to another person. As each person catches the ball of yarn, they complete the sentence: "God is..." with one or two words or a phrase. Then that person throws the ball to another person who also completes the sentence. When a web of yarn has been created across the whole circle, the leader points out that all of these responses are true, and together they tell the story of what the whole meeting (class) thinks God is.

### For High School and Adults

Following are quotes from *The Religious Philosophy of Quakerism: the beliefs of Fox, Barclay, and Penn based on the Gospel of John* by Howard Brinton. They are for teens and/or adults to consider as they form and articulate their concept of God:

*God is:*

"...a union like that of the branch with the vine..." (p. 57)

"...a vastness of sunlight focused to a single comprehensible point..." (p. 12)

"...joy and peace that passes understanding..." (p. 27)

"...an inward knowledge of good and evil..." (p. 27)

"...the human mind, opened into natural things to see...all creation..." (p. 51)

"...illuminations and openings of divine light in the human mind..." (p. 57)

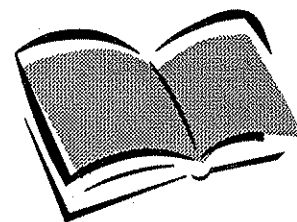
*Questions for discussion:*

- ❖ What can you say that God is?
- ❖ Is it possible to put one's experience of God into words?
- ❖ Have you ever explained Quakerism or what you think God is to another person? How did it go?

**For Elementary and Middle School**

**I. Activities:** Following are two activities which can be done as First-day students consider the places God can be found: in people, in nature or in art.

*Class Journal:* The teacher makes a journal, decorating the cover in an attractive way. Each week anyone can add a page to the class journal, answering the question:



*"This week I experienced God..." or "God is...to me".*

*First-day School Circles:* Out of discussions in First-day School circles or gatherings before First-day school begins, an older student could record anything said which completes the sentences above.

**II. Where we might find God:** When Friends are asked about when they know God exists, they say that they find God in people, in nature, in art, in music, or any number of venues. Children will be able to think of many other places they see God. For the moment choose one of the three areas which follow to concentrate on:

**God in People**

*Questions to think about:*

- ❖ What qualities do you see in other people which makes you think about God?
- ❖ In your family, your siblings, parents, grandparents, or aunts and uncles?
- ❖ In school, your classmates or your school teachers?
- ❖ In the Friends in your meeting, your First-day teachers?
- ❖ In your friends?

*Activities:*

People Scavenger Hunt:

In First-day class, ask each person to write on a 3 x 5" card something about themselves that they would like others to know about. For example, a special talent or skill, something good that is going to happen, or something that they did which was very interesting or exciting. The teacher collects the cards and reads the first one. The student who guesses correctly the author of the card, gets to read off the next one; the guessing continues until every person's special gift has been guessed. At the conclusion of the exercise, ask the class which was the most surprising revelation.

Something Good about Something Bad:

On a flip chart or at the blackboard, make a list of good things and another list of bad things. Either at the blackboard, on individual note cards, or paper, have the children think up something bad about something good or something good about something bad. Read them to each other. Be creative and silly. For example:

- Something bad: homework  
Something good: gets you out of doing dishes!
- Something bad: mud  
Something good: can't grow petunias without it!
- Something good: balloon  
Something bad: you can't sit on it too long.  
you can't keep it in a room full of porcupines.
- Something good: ice cream  
Something bad: that sharp pain in your forehead when it goes down too fast.

This leads into a discussion of finding good things in people:

*Finding that of God in people or  
Allowing God in you to speak to that of God in others.*

From: "Something Bad about Something Good" in the *Incredible Indoor Games Book* by Bob Gregson, Fearon Teacher's Aids

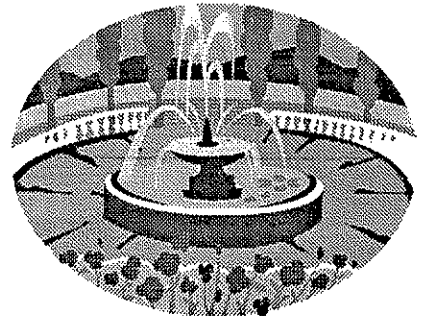
**God in Nature**

*Questions to think about:*

- ❖ What activity do you like to do outside, in nature? Answers might be: hiking, swimming, walking, canoeing, gardening, rock climbing, or playing sports
- ❖ When you are doing these things, what do you feel like?
- ❖ Do you have any feeling of God's presence?

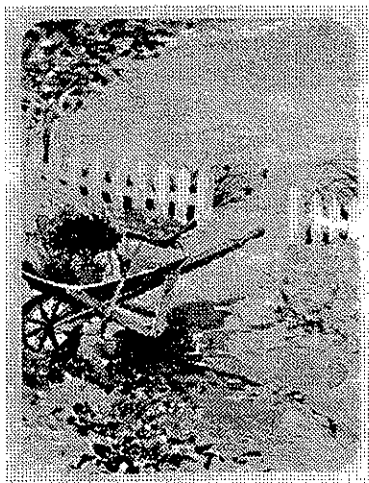
*Did you know this about William Penn?*

Did you know that William Penn created patches of green space in Philadelphia when he designed the city? He did this so that people living in his "Green Country Towne" could have a place to feed their spirits in the middle of bustling streets and busy people. One green space in Philadelphia is across the street from the Liberty Bell, between 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> streets on the north side of Market Street. Rittenhouse Square is another park used by many people in Philadelphia.



Questions:

- ❖ Do you ever go out in your yard or to a park just to get away from people? How does going there make you feel?
- ❖ What are the things in nature which are so beautiful that they take your breath away? Perhaps children will answer snowflakes, spring flowers, a sunset, or a fresh snow.
- ❖ Do you see God in these things?



*Something to think about:* How is God Like a Garden?

Possible answers:

- Sometimes you can't see the plants
- Gardens need care and attention (you have to pay attention to or listen to God)
- There are different flowers or plants in a garden (there are different ideas about God)
- Gardens are alive.
- Gardens are beautiful
- Gardens feed us

God in Art

*For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to devote ourselves to the good deeds for which God has designed us"*

Ephesians 2:10

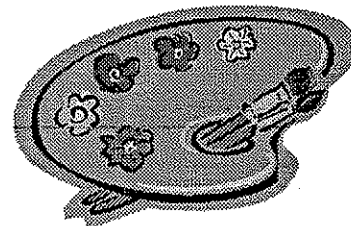
*"We are being created by the saving touch of Christ... There is no distinction between the artist and the person who has experienced God. No experiencer of God is not an artist".*

Matthew Fox in "Whee! We, Wee, all the Way Home"

Questions:

Read the preceding quotes and then ask:

- ❖ Do you see yourself as a work of art in progress?
- ❖ When you draw, color, paint or create something, do you feel God 's presence?



*Activities:*

Choose one of these activities. When either is complete, ask the students what was going through their minds or bodies as they were working in the silence.

Tissue Paper Collage – Ahead of time set up your work area. Cover a work table with newspaper. Provide at least one 9" x 12" piece of white poster board for each person. Place several jars of liquid glue (watered-down Elmer's™ or Liquitex™, a liquid glue base sold in art stores) on the table and provide one good-sized easel brush for each person. On a separate table lay out piles of bright tissue paper cut into small (about 4" x 6") rectangles. Ask the group to move silently to the work area. Describe the technique briefly – place cut or torn tissue paper on the white board and paint over it with the glue. After 10-20 minutes, ask people to describe their creations and to talk about the experience of working silently. Little children need smocks for this activity. Provide an example when you describe the process.

Clay – Ahead of time set up a work area. Have one ball of potter's clay for each person. Cover the work area with plastic (including the floor if you are in a carpeted area). Ask the group to move silently to the work area and to work with the clay in silence for 10-20 minutes. At the close of the work time, ask people to describe their creations and to talk about the experience of working in silence.

**For Upper Elementary Age**

Choose one of these books to read aloud, and follow with a discussion of what each child believes about God:

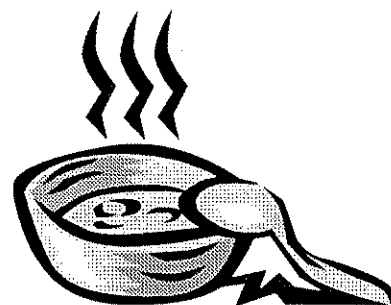
- *Where Does God Live* by Rabbi Marc Gellman and Msgr. Thomas Hartman, Triumph Books, 1987, could be read aloud over several weeks. It is a good guide for parents and teachers for talking to children about God but good for children also. It can be borrowed from the PYM Library, 1-800-220-0796, #7220.
- *What Is God?* by Etan Boritzer, Firefly Books, Ltd. 1991, can be read aloud with pauses for students to wonder. The book talks about prayer, other religions, other gods and how one knows that God exists., to borrow from the PYM Library and for sale from FGC Bookstore, 1216 Arch Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102 or by phone 215-966-4556.



### For Elementary Ages

#### Activity: Vegetable Soup:

Each child speaks in turn about what "God is..." to them. They then choose a vegetable to represent, symbolize, or remember their concept of God, and add it to the soup which has been started ahead of class. When the vegetables in the soup have finished cooking, and the children are eating it, each child can recall what each vegetable symbolized. Then the teacher can say that the soup represents what the whole class thinks God is.



*Stories:* Choose one of the following to read aloud to your class, followed by a discussion of that each thinks God is.

- *Where Can I Find God?* by Helen G. Doss, 1968, Abingdon Press, in the PYM Library.
- *Why God is Like a Wet Bar of Soap* by Chuck Fager, 1989, in PYM Library and at FGC Bookstore.
- *Where is God? Thoughts for Young Worshipers* by Katherine Karsner, 1967, PYM Religious Education, in the PYM Library. This book contains many one-page stories to read aloud and start children thinking about God.

### For Pre School and Early Elementary Ages

- "Love Is Like the Warmth of Sunshine" by Caroline Pineo in *Lighting Candles in the Dark*, PYM RE Committee. Available from the PYM Library or from FGC Bookstore. This is a very short story about how Helen Keller knew what love was even though she never touched it...much like God.
- *I Wanted to Know All about God* by Virginia L. Kroll, 1994, W.B. Eerdmans, in the PYM Library.
- *God Made the World* by Pelagie Doan, 1960, Lippincott Co., in the PYM Library.
- *Old Turtle* by Douglas Wood, 1992, Pfeifer-Hamilton Publishers, in the PYM Library (1-800-220-0796, #7220), and available from FGC Bookstore (1-800-966-4556).

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