

# Spring into all age worship



## A pack of resources to help

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## Why do all age worship?

*“Worship is our response to an awareness of God. We can worship alone, but when we join with others in expectant waiting we may discover a deeper sense of God’s presence. We seek a gathered stillness in our meetings for worship so that all may feel the power of God’s love drawing us together and leading us.”*

*Quaker Faith & Practice – 1.02.8*

Meeting for worship is a space and time when Friends gather together to wait, listen and to share in this moment of their spiritual journeys.

Why have all age worship? It is an opportunity for all ages to worship together - a time when we can truly be a worshipping community.

Children learn about worship through coming to all age worship. They can experience the benefits and power of silence; enjoy being with adults (and vice versa) while still having a focussed activity to guide them through the meeting for worship. Adults have the opportunity to worship in a different way, to minister through ways other than the spoken word e.g. through creative activities or singing.



The experience of many is that all age worship provides the chance to really come to meeting for worship with heart and mind prepared. Many welcome the focus provided during all age worship, especially for people who find it challenging to settle into meeting for worship. If all age worship is regular, children, young people and adults become used to the way of worship and the periods of silence can be quite deep and the ministry, in whatever form, very profound.

You could take the opportunity to promote your meeting within the community by offering all age worship. Put a notice in local papers, websites or in newsagents stating that Quaker Meeting welcomes families and outlining what you are offering.



## Making the decision

Hopefully the decision to have all age worship will have evolved from as many people as possible in the meeting talking about it – including elders, overseers, children’s committee, the children and young people.

To help this happen discuss the idea with others. Talk in children’s committee, talk with elders. Be clear about what it is you are wanting to do. Take a proposal to local meeting. Encourage people to ask questions, voice their doubts and anxieties, and share their hopes. Free the way for people to come to all age worship with open minds and hearts. Challenge people to live adventurously.

Take it in stages. If you are a big meeting it might be better at first to have the all age worship in another space with interested adults. This is a half way stage so remember even if this works well you are aiming at worshipping altogether in one room as the main meeting for worship.

Another option is to offer Friends who are not happy to be in all age worship a separate space to worship. Hopefully this will be a minority of people.

Be clear with people about what will happen in all age worship. Explain there will be a “structure” – there will be periods of quiet, perhaps a story and /or optional activities.



## How to do it

Keep the plan simple and prepare well – careful planning pays off! Children particularly like to know what is happening. Prepare them well and they will respond positively and worship will be a good experience for everyone. Involve as many people as possible in the planning. Ask children to be elders.

Children will share their innermost thoughts if we can listen carefully to them - looking at a picture they’ve done, hearing their words, watching their actions.

Don’t be daunted by the prospect of doing all age worship. There may be a few obstacles to start with but the benefits will far out weigh any doubts or anxieties. The sense of togetherness and community in all age worship is a joy.

# What to do

## A framework for thinking about all age meeting for worship

How do we create a meeting for worship for all ages? The pattern that is outlined below can be followed for any meeting, whether it is all age worship, children's meeting for worship, or 'adult' meeting - the only difference is the amount of visible input.

All age worship is planned and facilitated so Friends come prepared, are welcomed and the meeting gathered. Seeds are planted, an activity may be offered, and openings made for ministry. The worship grows into a life of its own - held in the care of the elders of the Meeting.

Elders are responsible for the holding of the meeting for Worship – it is important that they are included in the planning.

Here is a framework for thinking about all age meeting for worship:

Coming to meeting with hearts and minds prepared. This is an individual responsibility and elders should, as far as is possible, make sure that all members and attenders of the meeting are aware that on this occasion meeting for worship will be all together in one room. It may be necessary to explain this is not a children's event for Friends to observe but the whole meeting gathering for worship. Provision should be made to greet and provide an explanation for visitors. Those who have met to plan this meeting will need to have prepared an introduction and a 'gathering', with the theme or story being given in Ministry.

Welcome. Arriving, being greeted, shaking hands and being welcomed into a warm, light, safe space. The chairs should be gathered in a circle with room for buggies as well as wheel chairs; flowers should be in place as a cheerful greeting - but not within reach of wandering toddlers; a carpet or blanket should be in place on the floor.

Gathering. Looking round, recognising Friends and being together. Often this is just glancing round the room, exchanging the occasional smile. But we come to Meeting to be with each other and worship together. With the gathering of a new group we have the opportunity to get to know one another a little better. We might share names, say how we came to meeting or pass a smile at everybody or gather first to make colourful name badges for each other.

Opening ourselves. This involves settling down, making ourselves ready to listen to others and to that of God within us. This may follow on naturally as we gather, it may come from a stilling or centering exercise, or it may be the warmth in the embrace of everybody else beginning to settle.

Listening. Inside to ourselves, to others, to a 'story' or a theme. Stories we think

about and share may be stories about ourselves, our lives, or our world. They may be the stories Jesus told, stories of Quakers long ago or stories of our Quaker work and our witness today.

Alongside. The story is given as prepared ministry into the Meeting and it asks us to put ourselves alongside what is shared, what it might mean and to consider how it speaks to us? This feeling may grow inside us and take us forward, and we might want to share it into the Meeting. In all age worship many people welcome the chance to express their feelings creatively in a drawing, a doodle, a poem or some other craft. It is important to give the opportunity and the permission for this and make it clear that it is not obligatory. Make sure that a way is available to do this and then share it into the meeting as ministry. Sharing may be 'out loud' or in silence, with adult support ready if necessary. There may be further reflection and sharing either spoken or in silence.

Conclusion. This can be with the shaking of hands or the sharing with others of any creative ministry. Finally, tea, coffee, squash and biscuits - a whole worshipping community sharing food together.



### Some ideas for creative activities giving opportunity for ministry

As we move forward in worship our thoughts and feelings begin to take shape prompted from within. Often coming as words, these thoughts may be 'given' to the gathered meeting in spoken or silent ministry. These thoughts may also be expressed as a drawing or doodle, fashioned by making and shaping, or crafted into a poem or piece of writing. By introducing a creative activity and welcoming the sharing, or 'giving', into the meeting, we enable ministry from all ages.

When introducing an activity into meeting for worship it is very important to make sure to make the physical environment as inclusive as possible. Use low tables so children can see onto them and older people do not have to reach down to the floor. Make sure paper, pencils etc have been distributed where everyone can reach them; invite care for each others needs.

Be careful that introductions are clear and easy to understand. An introduction or reading by a child or young person is a lovely idea but if it is given in a hesitant

## Some ideas for creative activities continued.....

whisper it may leave people anxious and confused. A sensitive repetition for clarity could be helpful. This might also be a difficulty with children's spoken ministry. A sensitive 'I liked it when Katie said that she.....' will help those saddened by feelings of exclusion.

In any activity it is important that everyone is free to choose whether they draw, write, doodle or make, or whether they just think or imagine. Some people find writing very difficult, others become very anxious if asked to draw, each person must feel able to contribute in the way that is comfortable for them. How can we find our own way to express or describe our thoughts or feelings? Can we share them with each other? What is our ministry?

Some examples of creative activities that offer opportunities for ministry:

- Reading, writing and drawing.

A poem, story or quotations can be used to bring people into worship. Pens, paper and pencils can be used to help people express or describe their thoughts about how a story speaks to them - these can be shared with others if people want to. Sometimes it is helpful to read a passage a second time.

Writing or drawing on appropriate cut-outs to share and place into the centre can be very successful. Templates are available in 'All in One Room' (see page 12) or use the artistic talent in your Meeting.

One example is a 'leaves on a tree' activity. People are invited to write, draw or sketch their thoughts on paper leaves cut out in advance and spread around the meeting room with writing and drawing materials readily available. A tall, bare, branched 'tree' is secured firmly in the centre of the room. The thoughts are shared, if people want to, and then hung on the tree. This has been used for welcoming a baby, expressing hopes for the world and also for remembering a Friend whose death had recently been announced.

Other examples include drawing or writing on cut out butterflies for exploring hopes and ideas, on cut out shells for thinking and wondering about how people feel on the inside about God or love, on cut out fruit shapes for exploring the idea of the fruits of the Spirit. Another idea is to cut out Christmas present shapes on which could be drawn or written gifts we would like to receive to make or help our 'light' shine, or people might draw round their feet and cut out the shapes on which could be written or drawn things about little or big journeys or steps each person has taken.

- Making things.

Boxes. Simple fold up boxes can be made by individuals as an illustration of everyone working together, everyone listening carefully and following instructions together. This might be a good 'gathering' exercise before meeting begins or for use during meeting. The end product is something which in itself is very satisfactory, and decoration can be used to develop an idea or theme. A simple template is available



on Additional Sheet 0.F in *Journeys in the Spirit* children's work edition 0 at <http://together.woodbrooke.org.uk/resource.php?r=JC> . Click on Series 1 and then Issue 0 and Issue 0 additional sheets.

Inside the box people might write or draw things they are good at or gifts they have and then put their name on the outside. It could be a treasure box with an invitation to record all the treasures in the world that people love; these could be drawn or written on the outside before the box is folded and stuck. It could be a testimony box with Quaker testimonies written or drawn on the inside or outside. The *Quaker meeting and me* booklet, see page 12, has lovely pictures to help children with this.

Floating paper flowers. See series 7, issue 60 – additional resources in this link [http://together.woodbrooke.org.uk/resource.php?r=JC#step\\_ref\\_190](http://together.woodbrooke.org.uk/resource.php?r=JC#step_ref_190) for a sheet of printable flowers and instructions. Coloured with wax crayons and with special thought or prayer written on they can then be floated on water and watched while they open.

Stars in the sky created together. Stars cut out from silver card may be placed on a dark cloth in a pattern as if in a sky, a constellation, or as individual stars. Stars in the sky have been used to help people find their way. These cut out stars can be used to help people think, talk and share about the things – people, things they believe, values, ideas that help them find or keep their way as they go through life. Thoughts can be shared in worship as stars are laid down.

- Choosing and Sharing.

Use postcards, magazine or news pictures. These can be laid out and, after each person has chosen one, they can, if they wish, share the reasons, thoughts or feelings about their choice into meeting.

Display a large poster of a painting or other picture. Tell its story. Ask people to look carefully at the picture. What can they find in it? How does it speak to them? What would your own picture be like? Could you draw it?

An example of a picture is the 'Peaceable Kingdom' by Quaker Edward Hicks - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Edward\\_Hicks\\_-\\_Peaceable\\_Kingdom.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Edward_Hicks_-_Peaceable_Kingdom.jpg)



## Some worked out plans:

### Example 1. A simple plan for an all-age meeting for worship about George Fox

Before you begin this all age meeting for worship make sure that you take a little time for yourself and anybody working with you to still, center and worship.

*Resources and preparation: You will need A4 sheets of paper in a variety of colours, pencils, coloured pens and crayons, glue, glue brushes, scissors, some other bits such as tissue paper and sequins to decorate the feet. You will also need a large sheet of paper to stick the finished feet on.*

*Involve others from the meeting, perhaps elders, to read the passages from Quaker Faith & Practice*

Begin by welcoming everyone to this all age meeting for worship. Start with a few moments of quiet.

Read *Q F & P Advices and Queries 42* starting at “Be patterns, be examples....”

Acknowledge that this is probably a very familiar passage, but what does it mean? Wherever we go we must try to set a good example, living out our Quaker testimonies. If we can do this we will feel good about ourselves and can walk cheerfully as George Fox says and can walk with a spring in our step. And today we are going to think about footsteps.

Read *Q F & P 19.06*.

George Fox will have had to take quite a lot of steps to climb up the hill wouldn't he? And he wasn't sure what he would find at the top of the hill. He probably knew there would be a lovely view but he didn't expect to see all those people waiting for him and wanting him to speak to them. Perhaps he was a bit taken aback.

Like George we take steps all the time to get to places. We walk, run, hop and skip. We may walk fast or slowly and sometimes we need help to walk. Some people use a walking stick.

We also talk about taking a big step meaning we do something important in life. A big step on our journey through life, like George meeting all those people who had come to see him.

This might be:

- Starting school or moving into a new class
- Starting a new job
- Being asked to do something important like talking to the class about your project or giving a lecture
- Moving house
- Retiring from working

Sometimes when we take a big step like this we feel nervous, a bit scared, or excited, wondering what it will be like, or impatient – wanting it to happen soon.

Can you think of some important footsteps you have taken, or footsteps you hope or would like to take? Have a few minutes of quiet to think about this.

Now you are going to draw round your foot, either with your shoes on or you can take your shoes and socks off to do this. Cut out your foot shape and then write or draw a picture of your important footstep that you thought about earlier. Use the materials here to decorate your foot.

Place the feet on the large sheet on the floor (the feet can be stuck on later) and invite people to look at them in silence. They may need to walk round the sheet.

Ask people to return to their seat and finish with some quiet.



## Example 2. A simple plan for an all-age meeting for worship about Jesus and the great picnic

Before you begin this all age meeting for worship make sure that you take a little time for yourself and anybody working with you to still, center and worship.

*Resources and preparation: You will need: a large cloth or blanket to lay on the floor - picnic style; A4 and A5 pieces of white card; oil pastels; coloured and writing pencils; a selection of Bibles – some with pictures; drawing pins or ‘white tak’.*

*The week or more before the all age worship ask everybody to bring some food to share to the Meeting.*

*Lay out the Bibles, the colouring and drawing materials around the room at different heights for different ages. Find a simple prayer or words of thankfulness for food and loving company to be spoken at the end of the meeting for worship.*

Wait until everybody is settled. Be still and silent for a few moments; welcome everybody. Say that you are going to talk about Jesus and how the people he met were changed and sometimes challenged by meeting him. Sometimes we meet people who make everything seem better, so that even ordinary things become more exciting. They make us feel special. Ask everyone to think about the people they may know who make them feel like that, who make them feel special. What is it about them that makes you feel special, that makes things feel different?

Now say that you are going to tell a story. Say that the part of the Bible called the Gospels is made up of stories about what it was like to meet Jesus. Everyone who met him was changed by him; people who were sad, angry, ill, afraid went away happy, whole, healed and hopeful. Often people who went to him feeling smug, confident and important went away feeling troubled, challenged and uneasy. He had a way of turning people’s ideas (and the world) upside down.

Tell the story of the ‘feeding of the 5,000’ – the great picnic, found on page 2 of issue 63 of the children’s edition of *Journeys in the Spirit* <http://together.woodbrooke.org.uk/resource.php?r=JC> , choose Series 7. Read it slowly. When you have finished, draw people’s attention to the drawing materials and Bibles. Say that, if people want to, they can quietly use the materials to write draw or colour something about the story – it might be a picture, some words or a shape or pattern that the story made them think of.

After everyone has completed what they have been doing or if it can be left for a few moments, ask the children to come and help bring all the food into the Meeting Room to be shared. The food should be laid out on the blanket or cloth and on tables.

When the food has been laid out the children sit again and quiet is maintained for a short while. Read, or have a child read, the prayer or words of thankfulness that you have chosen. End meeting for worship with a handshake and ask everybody to put their drawings or writing, if they want to, onto a wall or table for others to look at. Alternatively the pictures or writing can be talked about during lunch.

Begin the sharing of food with everyone passing somebody else something before eating themselves. Enjoy the company!



### Example 3. A simple plan for an all-age meeting for worship about one of our 5 senses, the sense of hearing, 'Desert Island discs'

Before you begin this all age meeting for worship make sure that you take a little time for yourself and anybody working with you to still, center and worship.

*Resources and preparation: Lay out craft materials on a few different tables in the room. Children love colouring sheets. If you can, have some of these. The tables can also have other objects on them. These might be children's books, music books or quotations that you feel are appropriate (Quaker Faith & Practice 2.12, 21.27-42).*

*In the weeks before, ask members of the meeting to provide you with their 'Desert Island Discs'. Explain that you may use them in an all age meeting for worship. Make sure they understand that they will not have to talk about their music, unless they wish to at the time. Also explain that you may not use all the suggestions or recordings that you are given. If you have musicians in your number ask them if they would be prepared to play something. Make sure the children are asked too. (If this seems too difficult, just choose some music yourself. Do whatever is possible and feasible or ask the children only).*

*You will need to prepare a 'playlist'. If the meeting is going to last 45 minutes, you may need about 7 tracks or recordings to play. If you are able, the best thing to do is prepare a playlist on an mp3 player. But the most important thing is to choose a medium that you know is reliable. This may mean CDs. That is fine. If you have live musicians, they may be nervous. Make sure you have let them know exactly what they have to do. This will make them feel more secure.*

On the day, once everybody has gathered and settled, welcome everyone to the meeting.

Explain that the meeting will be exploring sound, music and its importance in our lives.

Say that you are starting with a period of silence but that then there will be music played at intervals throughout the meeting. Anyone can share during this time but the person who chose the piece of music might want to say why they chose it.

Show them the craft materials that are on offer if they wish to use those too.

Leave a period of silence.

Play each track or invite the musicians to play. Leave up to five minutes between each piece. Be guided by the ministry and the meeting. Sometimes longer gaps will feel right; sometimes shorter.

If you feel it will work for your meeting, end with a song that everyone can sing together. This could be something like *Lord of the Dance* (Sidney Carter) or choose something seasonal. The most important thing is to choose something that is familiar for as many people as possible.



## Example 4. A simple plan for an all age meeting for worship focused on Advices and Queries 41 & 42 about simplicity

Before you begin this all age meeting for worship make sure that you take a little time for yourself and anybody working with you to still, center and worship.

*Resources and preparation: Before everybody gathers, prepare a low table (preferably circular) or a rug for the centre of meeting for worship. Cut out a large paper or cloth circle in blue or green to represent the earth. Do not worry about it looking like a map. Have a piece of paper or card in different colours and shapes for each person and have pens and pencils within easy reach.*

Once everybody has gathered and settled – very young children may be on laps or rugs and cushions – a child and older person read Advices and Queries 41 & 42.

Explain that the circle is meant to represent our home, the beautiful earth and then follow the instructions below.

Ask everybody to think of a beautiful place or a memory of a beautiful place that is part of the earth. It could be a wood that they have visited; it could be a window box that they have noticed on someone's house; it could be a memory from a holiday or seeing snow or the sea for the first time; it could be a bird, animal or other creature; it could be an object like a shell or a stone or even some food they have tasted.

After some silence ask people of whatever age to share their thoughts and ideas if they would like to. They can then write or draw something on their piece of paper and place it onto the cloth, creating a sort of garden of their world – some people may need help with this. If they want to keep their place or memory a secret, they can place their piece of paper face down.

Once everybody has finished – some may need help – end with a time of stillness.

Afterwards have a feast of 'helping the earth' tea, coffee, juice, biscuits and cake – local where possible and definitely organic and fairtrade.



These four examples come from *Journeys in the Spirit* series 5 – 8; each issue of these series includes a simple plan for all age worship. See [www.quaker.org.uk/journeys/archive-children](http://www.quaker.org.uk/journeys/archive-children)



## What else is there to help you?

**Books.** The books and guide below are available from the Quaker Bookshop - [www.quaker.org.uk/shop](http://www.quaker.org.uk/shop) or 020 7663 1030.

*All in one room.* This is a folder of well tested ideas, activities, background information and careful descriptions of how to do all age worship.

*The Worship Kit: A Young Persons Guide to Quaker Worship.* This guide has lots of ideas that are very easily adapted for use in all age worship.

*Quaker meeting and me.* A beautifully illustrated guide for children to Quaker meeting for worship.

**Training.** A range of training workshops is available including one focussing on all age worship. To find out about these please phone 0207 663 1013, email [cypadmin@quaker.org.uk](mailto:cypadmin@quaker.org.uk) or go to [www.quaker.org.uk/workshops](http://www.quaker.org.uk/workshops)

*Journeys in the Spirit.* The children's work edition of this resource is published monthly. Back copies can be found online at:

<http://together.woodbrooke.org.uk/resource.php?r=JC> .

To subscribe go to <https://forms.quaker.org.uk/journeys-in-the-spirit-subscription/> phone: 020 7663 1013 or email: [cypadmin@quaker.org.uk](mailto:cypadmin@quaker.org.uk)

**Area Meeting Children and Young People's Work Advocates.** Most Area Meetings have appointed a Children and Young People's Work Advocate. They can be a good source of support, encouragement and ideas. If you don't know your Advocate contact your Area Meeting Clerk who will know. For Guidance for Advocates for Children & Young People's Work and area meetings visit <https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/quaker-roles/cyp-work-advocates>

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**Published by the Children and Young People's Staff Team, Quaker Life**

Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ Phone: 020 7663 1013

Email: [cypadmin@quaker.org.uk](mailto:cypadmin@quaker.org.uk) Website: [www.quaker.org.uk/cyp](http://www.quaker.org.uk/cyp)

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