

Building a Children's Meeting for Worship at Redland

From 11-11.15am the children are in main meeting. At 11.15 they come down to the community room when prompted by the person leading the session. 0-5s are in the crèche room next door. From 11.15-12pm the children are the responsibility of those taking the children's session.

What is children's meeting for worship? The essence is intangible, but very real. Perhaps it is a time for reflection, for all; we are alongside the children as they experience Quaker meeting and begin to think about what it might mean for them to be a Quaker. We hope it is a time where children and adults build relationships that nurture them and help them become part of our all age community. We do not have learning objectives, but take the children, if they are willing, into main meeting to talk about what they have been doing.

So how do we build a Children's Meeting for Worship?

1. Prepare in advance: planning with your fellow helper can make it easier. What do you enjoy, especially with children? Baking? Sewing? Crafting? Drama? Play to your strengths. Usually we have a theme for the term (e.g. fairness/Fairtrade). Please ask if you are unsure. There are resources available at:

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/children-and-young-people/work-quaker-setting/resources-children/journeys-child> These include outline plans for children's meetings, resources and so on. It is a confusing site but try clicking through on the links. Don't be afraid to ask for advice – and share what has worked well!

2. Prepare the community room in good time: warm, light. Tables, chairs and any crafting equipment set out (in the shelving behind the blinds is our equipment, available for all; we also have a Scrapstore card available, do ask). Room on the floor to sit, possibly around the green felt mandala (on the shelving), possibly on floor cushions, although the children fight over those. Flowers, if you have them, for the table.

3. When you come into the community room at 11.15, ask the children to sit in a circle. Parents are welcome to stay with anxious new children. Go round and encourage everyone to introduce themselves to make sure we all know each other's names. Maybe share a bit of news, or play a game. It can help to start with a story, or a poem, or a reading. Something to help start the children listening. Relax, take things slowly, listen carefully to the children and respond, enjoy getting to know them as they get to know you.

5. Next you could move to the tables, and maybe do a craft activity/game/cooking prepared beforehand, anything where you can be alongside the children to talk about whatever your topic is, or more generally. Often it is the conversations we have with the children, and the children have with each other, which are the richest part of children's meeting.

6. As it gets towards 12 start thinking about finishing up, ask the children if they are prepared to go back into Meeting and tell/show the adults what they have been doing. This can offer an opportunity to think about what you have been doing together. Sometimes they are reluctant but it is lovely if they can be persuaded. Go upstairs quietly, our clerk Julia will be giving the notices. She will invite the children to come in and talk to the meeting. After this they are the responsibility of their parents but usually rush off and eat biscuits. Some also enjoy handing them round!

7. Some general comments: attendance can vary wildly from one child to ten. Please do not be disheartened if there are no children – think of it as a children's meeting in your back pocket, ready for

next time! – or only one. The light in one child is just as valuable. Three children is a lovely number for calm reflection. If there are five or more your helper might be useful in coaxing children who become distracted back into the group, or holding parallel conversations, while you continue with the plan. But be adaptable! It can pay to bring a back-up story or game. Every child is different in the gifts they bring, and that can be challenging at times but we try to hold children's meeting under Quaker tenets: peacefully, truthfully, equitably.

8. Please tidy the room and put it back to how it was - the children can be encouraged to help, offering another opportunity for conversation. Thank you!