

Family Worship Pamphlet

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Christel Jorgenson is a member of Friends Meeting at Cambridge in New England Yearly Meeting, where she helps guide their monthly family worship as well as helping with some curriculum development. She's involved in the Quaker Religious Education Collaborative (quakers4re.org), an international grassroots collaborative. Currently a landscape gardener, her last incarnation was as the Youth and Education Secretary for NEYM, where she led the regional high school youth group and worked with monthly meetings around religious education. She'd like to put family worship information into a booklet form and to write more about worship metaphors.

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This is a draft document, meant for feedback and additions. It is based on material published in the Friends General Conference REsource publication, about 2005, and is available online at FGCQuaker.org
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INTRODUCTION

It matters that children learn that worship is what we do as a community of faith, that everyone is welcome, that their worship matters. When we teach children that their worship matters, we teach them that they are enough right here and right now as members of the church community. They don't need to wait until they can believe, pray or worship a certain way to be welcome here, and I know adults who are still looking to be shown that. It matters that children learn that they are an integral part of this church, that their prayers, their songs, and even their (badly or perfectly timed depending on who you ask) cries and whines are a joyful noise because it means they are present.

From "Dear Parents with Young Children in Church", "Iamtotallythatmom" blogspot

What a challenge our form of worship is for children! Even if you just consider the visuals – “still forms on every side” – it looks like a room full of adults either falling asleep or being punished with a “time out!” How can children be helped to feel the depth, the quickening, the opportunity to encounter God that draws us together?

I would like to share what many of us at Cambridge Friends Meeting have found helpful. For many years we've had what we call “Family Worship” the first Sunday of each month, held in the social room at the same hour as traditional unprogrammed worship in the meetinghouse. First Day School is not held that Sunday; the preschool through sixth grade children and their parents, along with any older youth or adults who wish to come, are invited. It serves as a chance for families to get acquainted, and for the rest of the meeting to have an opportunity to interact with children and families. It's also a monthly break for First Day School teachers, since Family Worship help is recruited from outside the teacher pool.

When I volunteered to be the new coordinator of the Family Worship, I knew many teachers and parents were hungering for help in developing their children's unprogrammed worship skills. How can we help children understand our worship? Can we use a program to enhance the unprogrammed experience? I also wanted to have an active time with children, giving them a space to praise and rejoice with body and voice, to use their eagerness and sense of wonder and imagination. I had in mind the work of Jerome Berryman and Godly Play™. His premise is that young children can be immersed in the mystery of scripture in their own, concrete-thinking kind of way, using their bodies, imagination, and play to relate to God and their worshipping community. I share his sense that our Christian heritage has deep stories to tell. I wanted our children to hear them, to experience them as much as possible, in a way that invites them in. There are also children's stories that have so many levels of meaning that relate to our faith and practice. I also wanted something that adults might be able to enter experientially.

When I say these words, I wonder how close we have come to this ideal. I know that we have had moments. Does it work for everyone? Probably not. Not all parents and kids participate. But I feel that if it's done with love and care, it might be significant for many. I don't feel required to please everyone, but to be faithful as God leads.

WHAT WE DO

Over time we have settled into a format that seems to work for us and our community.

We have about 70 minutes, taking the time that "big meeting" uses for worship plus the time for announcements. It often feels short because there is so much we'd like to do together.

We provide consistency and continuity. We want to include each time: Community building that helps us know each other better. Allowing the participants to use their voices and bodies. Food for thought for both children and adults. A chance to be creative. Help in understanding what's happening or could happen during worship on the basis of silence. A time of worshipful quiet.

Our program format:

A. Welcome

This is very short. It may include an overview of what we're doing today and our theme.

B. Singing

We start with a joyful noise! For our members who miss music in Quakerism, we have a program! We repeat some songs month to month. "Praise Ye the Lord," with its up and down movements and loudness, is our classic opener. We always have some action songs plus some songs to tie in with the theme. We use a flip chart in front, which records our repertoire. We are also experimenting with an overhead projection of song lyrics and for use later in the program for illustrations if we're using a book. We try to balance simplicity (to include the youngest) and thematic message. Starting with music gives the latecomers an easy integration and also rewards the on-time folks with more fun.

C. Reiteration of welcome and introductions

This is a chance to hear from everyone and get a sense of the personalities in the room. Some children may choose to have their parent speak for them. We usually use "my name and" that will reinforce the theme and/or community. We find that positive topics set the stage for a positive experience. "My name and my favorite thing about fall" for instance. We look for a topic that both adults and children can answer.

D. A story

This is where things become more variable. It might be a picture book, with either the book held up for seeing illustrations or projected overhead or enlarged to 11x17 at the copy center. It might be a story teller with no illustrations. It might be a flannel board. Or some 'actors' dramatizing a story. Or objects on the floor in the "Faith and Play/Godly Play" mode. It could be someone talking about their own experience. It has been someone dancing and leading others in dancing. It has been talking about drumming and leading others in drumming.

E. Response

We invite a response to the story, first with a few open-ended questions and then usually an activity, art or craft work, or something verbal. This is often the invitation to creativity and joy. We have done many different things, depending on the book: making a terrarium from found objects outside; making a banner; making cards for absent friends; pantomimes in small groups; collages; small dioramas; decorating cookies; and on!

F. An introduction to open worship time

The introduction is kept short and as physical as possible. A rug to sit on in the center, a small chest where a candle is set and lit, and dimming the lights, together form the continuity of experience to create an environment that is open to the spirit and kid friendly. Something to hold in one's hand often helps a young one center, so something may be passed out as we settle. It can also be a tie to a worship metaphor (see the appendix).

G. Unprogrammed worship

This may be fairly brief, something between ten and twenty minutes. Sometimes there is verbal guidance. The point has not been to make the time longer (though that would/could be a worthy goal), but to develop a sense of a worshipping space that we're all in together. It's perfectly fine if the youngest end up going to the nursery when they get chatty or restless. They have had a time of community and preparation which may help them to sit longer as they get older.

H. Reflections from worship:

One may need only ask, "Is there anything someone would like to share from their experience?" This also can't be too extended because the children are usually ready to jump up from their places as soon as we begin shaking hands at rise of meeting.

I. Announcements and helping to put the room back in usual order.

TIPS

1. Share information
Post the agenda and refer to it each time. Send mailers to families. This helps newcomers, creates the security of repetition for the children.
2. Use singing
 - a. Using song posters or overhead projection is preferable to individual song sheets or books because we're all looking up at the same thing, thus the song leader gets our eyes.
 - b. Repeat songs and use some action songs. These facilitate learning and understanding, especially for the youngest ones.
 - c. Think about the process of singing – self-expression within a structure, unity, harmony, emotional connection, relationship to theme. Allow the music to help you; the mood of a song can help with the transition to the next portion of the program.
 - d. Don't be afraid to clap or cheer (often a spontaneous response to a rousing song). The enthusiasm up front is usually infectious.
3. Create a physical environment that makes quiet worship time special
 - a. Allow kids to sit on the floor. Remember that on chairs they usually can't reach the floor with their feet and so are "ungrounded." This is where children play. Consider the earth as a reliable foundation, a place to make a connection. Make the floor space special with a rug and/or pillows and pads.
 - b. Give the children a worship posture to facilitate centering down. We explain to the children, "if you sit on the floor, it's with your bottom on the floor, legs crossed, not touching anyone unless you're with your parent." This choice gives freedom while serving to remind the children that this is not ordinary time or space. One of our hopes is that the children will develop an appreciation of how discipline can be helpful in arriving at a spiritual goal.
 - c. Light a candle – the light of Christ, the light of God, inside and outside us. You can close your eyes and it's still there. It moves but it stays in the same place. It is a lively visual focus.
 - d. Dim the lights in the room. This creates intimacy and cuts down on outside stimulation and distractions. It also gives a visual clue to slow down and be contemplative, and can be an invitation to try to see with "different eyes."
4. Welcome the arts, invite responding without words
Use pictures and symbols. Consider self-expression as part of the holy. Offering options increases the sense of freedom. Think about appealing to all the senses and what different forms response to a story can take.
5. Have no one segment longer than 15 minutes and provide stretch breaks
Respect attention spans and remember that young bodies need to move.
6. Invite adults who are not parents to be present
Children are usually expected to adjust to adult environments, but in family worship the adults are given opportunities to make any necessary adjustments. Entering into

one another's environments is a sign of love and caring. Can we be open to it, even if it means compromising the "purity" of one's worship time?

7. Prepare as thoroughly as possible

I recommend working out a detailed outline. Practice saying everything. Check times for each activity to see how it all fits in the allotted time. Share the outline with your team.

8. Strive to develop a team

Have a few as the core group, some just for a particular task. Be on the lookout for people to join the planning team or offer some skill or craft, happily if it represents different ages and gender presenting. Find ways to let kids volunteer. Be somewhat realistic about what people can take on. I have always felt it ideal to have some "regulars" greet people at the door, but parents with children often don't arrive 'til the last minute or later. A family might be coached to be the planning and presenting team for one session.

9. Don't expect consistent success, either from your ideas or from the response.

Kids' responsiveness varies. Sometimes they're cooperative and fully engaged, and some days they're "off" and nothing seems to work. Children tend to be more expressive of their inward state than adults. This comes with the territory. Don't let one negative experience with a child give you anxiety. Work on relationships, finding things to praise, looking for the kinds of activities that children will most enjoy. Think about ways that the more active children might work off a little energy before entering the room or maybe let an antsy child pace around in the back of the room. If a child doesn't seem engaged, try to explore why with the child and/or parent.

10. Work the program

Expect a shakedown cruise. People will be anxious at first (including you, the facilitator) and that can make people cross or confrontational. Don't take it personally. Try to ask for feedback and use it for future planning, with a healthy dose of evaluation on your part for whether it improves the experience. It may also just not be a format that works for particular children and adults. Hopefully your meeting can offer something for them, too.

11. Get input, especially from parents

How was this experience for them? How was it for their child? What kinds of activities does their child enjoy the most? Let parents know how they can develop more worship skills at home.

12. Get help

Go to ministry and counsel (or similar committee) to report and ask for advice. Make sure there's prayer support from them, both in meetings and from committee representatives in worship with you. Personally ask good pray-ers that you know to come to worship. And, of course, pray yourself! Divine guidance is essential. I believe there is a Shepherd who desires to work in our midst, Love that wishes to be expressed in our community, if we can be sensitive to the leadings.

APPENDIX 1

About Symbolism and Spiritual Metaphor

In helping children to understand worship, I have looked for physical metaphors. I realize that that is dangerous territory for a Quaker, since we have long appreciated George Fox's admonitions to avoid empty symbolism. Our meetinghouses are, generally speaking, devoid of traditional church symbols. Yet we also try to make our physical surroundings consistent with our principles, which will be symbolic on some level. Our lack of a steeple or of stained glass windows or of altars and the prevailing simplicity of form speak to what we believe. Yet there is also symbolism to be overcome, especially for a child: how can we overcome the "sleeping" or "time out" connotations of sitting in silence? How can we exemplify what is going on inside?

At family worship we use:

- a rug for a special place, connection to the earth
- a candle for light, inner light, God's presence with us
- dimming lights for the need to shut out outside distractions, to see with different eyes

At times, we have also used:

- a multicolor, shiny ribbon or yarn to "wrap twice around your hand and pass it on", which connected us all, like the spirit of God in worship
- a tree with our personalized bird cutouts hanging on it, like us, separate and unique, but all supported and sustained by the Spirit, one family
- a finger labyrinth, to find the way to the center
- image of God collages made by each person, showing how God may appear in a different form to different people
- an object from nature, gathered on a group walk, that connects us to the web of life
- a seed, chosen from a variety of seeds and seed pods, to hold in worship to remember the seed of God in each of us
- a shaken jar with glitter or silt, which becomes clearer, as we do, as it sits*
- a 'singing bowl' that continues vibrating and 'singing' long after it has been rung (and which will not ring if it is filled up with rocks or sand)
- a clear glass bowl, the 'container' of worship, God's presence, that holds us with whatever we bring to worship**

I find the ribbon/yarn passing to be powerful. The corporate sense of worship is a mystical reality that can be elusive. We don't come together just to hear messages or to sit in silence; we hunger for the sense of the sacred space and connection that is made by our presence together listening for God's voice. When the kids come into worship for just fifteen minutes (as ours do), they may miss this sense of mysterious communion.

The first time I tried passing the ribbon, I knew it was a gamble: what if the kids used the ribbon to tie each other up? But we'd established some expectations, and everyone responded. As soon as the ball of ribbon started with the first child in the center, a deep hush fell as each one waited for the ribbon to come to them. Isn't that like our expectant waiting? There were messages out of the silence that day that were moving and a tender feeling of sharing among us. We held the ribbon during worship and then at the rise, we cut the ribbon between us so each person had a piece to take home.

* page 55, "Opening Doors to Quaker Worship", Friends General Conference, 1994

** Description by Melinda Wenner-Bradley on the QREC website:

http://quakers4re.org/find-resources/being-present-worship-bowl-lesson?return_path=/find-resources%3Fkeys%3Dworship%7C~%7Cpage%3D3

APPENDIX 2

A Short Bibliography About Worship With Children

Sparkling Still; A Quaker Curriculum for First Day School or Home Use for Children Ages 3-8, by the Sparkling Still Working Group of Friends General Conference. Available at FGC Quakerbooks.

Really useful in format and resource/book lists, a very good place to start for curriculum and also adaptable for family worship format.

Opening Doors to Quaker Worship by the FGC Religious Education Committee, 1994

Might be available on Amazon.com, (not available at the FGC Quakerbooks)

Both thoughts about and structure for teaching about Quaker worship – check to see if it's lurking in your meeting library.

Puddles of Knowing; Engaging Children in Our Prayer Heritage, by Marlene Halpern, 1984 - might be available used.

A nun tells the story of her prayer room in a Catholic school. Eloquent and inspiring.

Example: Children respond to slides of Marc Chagall's paintings.

Gently Lead; How to Teach Your Children about God While Finding out for Yourself, by Polly Berrien Berends, 1991 – available used.

Polly is the author of the classic *Whole Child, Whole Parent*. In this book, she anecdotally tells her story of the ways one teaches as a parent. Don't miss her explanation of the creative process being like a radio – it's a great worship metaphor, too.

Four Doors to Meeting for Worship, by William Taber, Pendle Hill Pamphlet 306, 1992 – from FGC Quakerbooks.

The closer we adults come to understanding worship, the better we may be able to make worship accessible to others – including children. This gives you much food for thought.

Peaceful Piggy Meditation by Kerry Lee Maclean, 2006.

Ideas work well with preschool to early elementary; helps you find effective ways to explain how to sit, how to clear the mind.

Young Children and Worship, by Sonja M. Stewart and Jerome W. Berryman, 1990

This gives the principles and framework that Stewart and Berryman use in Godly Play, which could be a springboard for thinking about entering biblical mystery with children.

Online resources

Quakerspeak Videos:

How do Quakers Support Children's Spirituality?

<http://quakerspeak.com/how-to-do-quakers-support-childrens-spirituality/>

Various exercises and resources:

Quaker Religious Education Collaborative website: quakers4re.org

Meeting for worship in the classroom:

<https://www.fgcquaker.org/resources/meeting-worship-classroom>

Family meeting article:

<https://www.fgcquaker.org/sites/default/files/attachments/Family%20Meeting%20or%20Worship%20in%20the%20Monthly%20Meeting.pdf>

Spiritual Deepening:

<https://www.fgcquaker.org/beloved-community/living-beloved-community/facilitators>

Consider getting trained to use Godly Play™ and/or Faith and Play© curriculums.

The pedagogical principles can carry over into a family worship format, as can some of the stories. [We used "The Ten Best Ways to Live" (about the ten commandments) to make a lovely interactive family worship: we each put our 11th commandment on a construction paper ring that we joined together and displayed after worship.]

APPENDIX 3

Letter to Parents

*A message about Family Meeting for Worship at _____
on the first Sunday of the month*

Learning how to enter worship can be challenging for children. They experience so much through play and movement, that sitting still can seem antithetical to their spirit.

Nevertheless, with our over-stimulated and distracting culture, it seems more and more important that children be able to find their center and their connection with God's spirit in stillness.

Spend some quiet time together at home.

- Take time for some silence in giving thanks before meals.
- Linger for a quiet snuggle after a book is read.
- Reflect with your child about the day that has passed, listening to your hearts. What were the good things, the enjoyments, the satisfactions? What were the hard things, the times of hurt or confusion? Listen together then for a God response.
- When there is a problem or a disagreement, stop for a moment to breathe and pray and let your child know what you're doing.
- When observing the natural world, taking time to stop and listen quietly can lead to new discoveries and can help children appreciate the value and joy of listening.
- Ask your child to join you in a few minutes of a yoga and meditation routine: Stretch. Sit down in a cross-legged posture with hands in the lap. Close eyes. Feel breath going in and out of one's center. (A meditation bell is a wonderful addition.)

Think together with your child about how they can be alert to the Spirit when they are in worship.

What happens when your eyes are open? Have you ever tried to understand what is happening inside the other people at meeting? Have you ever blessed people as they come in the door?

What happens when your eyes are closed? Is there a "stream" of thought going through your mind? Can you think about beautiful things? I wonder if there are any problems you might ask God to help you with. I wonder if there things you are thankful for.

If you had something in your hands (bees wax, play dough, origami paper, a small cloth object), could holding it help you to go inside? I wonder if God might guide your hands.

[Though reading is quiet, it is not an activity that provides an opening to the community sense of Spirit. Some people read to prepare and quiet the mind, but reading during worship itself draws the mind out of the corporate worship experience. It is an escape.]

At family worship, we have both program and time for open worship. Singing, story, sharing reflections, laughing, moving, learning, serving one another . . . all part of our time together, a celebration of the community which worships together. It is also a time of learning about unprogrammed worship, trying different ways to help all of us, but especially our children, understand more about the inward process of quieting and listening to God. Some of these ways you may have tried at home, others may be new. We hope you and your child will come in a spirit of openness to experimenting and discovery.

As in the “big meeting”, we rely upon one another – bringing our inner lights together in one place is like gathering candles to make more illumination. Our full presence is a real gift we give each other. The discipline of worship is meant to bring us collectively into the Presence. In practical terms, when children are mingled on the floor or playing with toys, they have a hard time avoiding distracting each other. Sitting in a self-contained position, conscious breathing, and parental presence can help. (Toddlers are an age when parents respond to whether they can stay in the circle or need to move outside of the space.)

You and your children are precious to the Meeting community. Come and share this experience.

Any comments about your family’s experience or questions or ideas for themes would be gratefully accepted.

[Here’s where you’d insert contact information]

APPENDIX 4

Sample Lesson A - Family Meeting, A Quiet Place (by Douglas Wood?)

| Who | When | What |
|----------------|-------|---|
| Leader | 10:30 | Welcome! Nametags. Thanks for coming, glad you're here. Anyone new? Today we're going to hear the book A Quiet Place and then do some imagining about quiet places of our own. D is going to lead singing. |
| Song Leader | 10:35 | Singing: Love love love love (or Tis a Gift to Be Simple?) Peace is Flowing Like a River Teach Me to Stop and Listen |
| Leader | 10:45 | Thank you! Welcome again. Shall we go around with names? Is there anyone new? My name and one quiet place I know. |
| Story Reader | 10:49 | Now story time: Anyone who wants to can come down to sit in front. We have a great story to share today. Can someone help me by holding the book so everyone can see and turning the pages? Read "A Quiet Place" (6 min) |
| Leader | 10:55 | What kind of place would be a favorite quiet place for you? (share from group) |
| Leader | 11:05 | We're going to do a making project today, either a drawing or a little model. We hope that everyone, kids and adults, will think about what kinds of things and places help them when they want a quiet place. These can be places in our imagination, they don't have to be real places where we've been. H, can you explain what we have to work with and what the options are? |
| Project Leader | 11:07 | H explains table and material layout, including what you do when you're done with your project. |
| All | 11:10 | Project time, including admiration |
| All/ Leader | 11:25 | Now we are going to settle in for some silent worship together. You may hold your box or drawing if you wish. I wonder if it's possible to hold that space inside? I wanted you to know that finding a quiet place is a very, very old tradition. The Bible tells us that Jesus would sometimes go to a quiet place, especially before and after some really important event, or if he's been around lots of people. Sometimes he went into the desert. Sometimes he got in a boat and went out on the water. In a way, that's what we do in worship. We're in our separate boats but we're all in the same water that holds us up. Being quiet helps us to connect with God, helps us to notice what's going on inside. Get comfortable, but not touching anyone else unless it's a parent. If you're on the floor, you may sit cross-legged with your back straight. There are traditions that say that a straight back helps |

| | | |
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| | | spiritual energy to flow. Breathe slowly, slow down. Close your eyes if you want. What quiet place are you going to? Silent Worship |
| | 11:35 | Breaking meeting: Anyone have something to share about today? Announcements |

Sample Lesson B - Family Meeting, Prayer

| Who | When | What |
|-------------|-------|---|
| Leader | 10:30 | Welcome! Nametags. Thanks for coming, glad you're here. Today we're going to talk about prayer, just beginning because it's such a big topic. First we'll sing, then G is going to tell a story, then we're going to do a kind of prayer called a body prayer, and then we'll have silent worship. First let's sing! |
| Song Leader | 10:35 | Singing probably three songs. Hallelu, Teach me stop and listen. Give me oil in my lamp. |
| Leader | 10:44 | Thank you! Welcome again. Can we please go around with names? Since we're in the Thanksgiving month, and since gratitude is the heart of prayer, can you say your name and one thing you're grateful for. |
| Leader | 10:50 | We have this chart here, with the first word "what". What is prayer? (ideas from group) |
| Leader | 10:56 | G is going to tell us a story about prayer, specifically the kind we do in Meeting for worship. The story is about the Where When How of praying for some children a long time ago, at a time when Quakerism was very new and being a Quaker could get you into big trouble! George - |
| Storyteller | 10:58 | G tells story of the Children's Meeting of Reading, (p 76, <i>Opening Doors to Quaker Worship</i>) with wondering questions at the end. |
| Leader | 11:12 | We thought it would be nice to experiment with one way to pray with your body. It is also a good way to get your body ready for being still in silent worship. There are five parts to the body prayer and five people are going to speak their part and do their action. Then we are all going to do it with them. If you're too close to move your arms, see if you can move to get more room. [I, J, G, J, and D do their parts with actions] Now we all do the actions together. [we do it] Are there any children who could be in front to be the person making the movements? [we do it again] "can we all say it?" We all repeat the last line of each action. [we do it again] now lets do it the last time and this time just think the words silently and do the actions. [we do that] Thank you everyone |
| All/Chris | 11:25 | Now we are going to settle in for some silent worship together. Get comfortable, but not touching anyone else unless it's a parent. If |

| | | |
|--|-------|---|
| | | <p>you would like to come sit on the rug, you may. Relax. Slow down. Breathe. Let God come in with your breath and out with your breath. Close your eyes if that helps you feel your inside more. I will light a candle that reminds us that God is always here. Breathe slowly, slow down. Close your eyes if you want. I will shake hands at the end. Silent Worship</p> |
| | 11:35 | <p>Breaking meeting: I have some sheets you can take home so you can do the body prayer at home. Can I have a couple of passer outers? Announcements Let's get this room ready for coffee.</p> |

A Body Prayer to Try at Home

Beth Collea, RE Coordinator, NEYM

Figure 1



I am stable. I am grounded. I feel the earth beneath me. I feel balanced. I can't be pushed from this place of physical and spiritual grounding easily.

Figure 2



I reach up in gratitude for all that is above me—the sky, the firmament, the stars and planets of the night sky, the clouds and sunshine of the day. **It is part of me and I am part of it.**

Figure 3



I gather the world of animals and sea creatures to my heart. I celebrate the world of plants. I am grateful for all of them. **I am part of all of life and all of life is part of me.**

Figure 4



I reach out to my whole human family in love and service, witness and welcome. **They are part of me and I am part of them.**

Figure 5



I reach inward to listen for the still, small voice. **God (the Spirit) is part of me and I am part of God (the Spirit).**
(Stay in the prayer position, quiet and still, for a few seconds.)

Sample Lesson C - Waiting

| Who | When | What |
|-----------------|-------|---|
| Leader | 10:30 | Welcome! Nametags. Thanks for coming, glad you're here. Our theme today is waiting. I have been waiting all month to be here with you! But there's more. We're going to start with singing, led by _____. |
| Song Leader | 10:35 | Singing probably four songs. Allelu, Seek Ye First, Love will Follow You? Blessed Quietness? Michael Row the Boat Ashore? |
| Song Leader | 10:45 | Thank you! Welcome again. Can we please go around with names? How about, your name and One Word that you think of when you think of Spring. ONE WORD! |
| Leader | 10:50 | It's time for our Story. Does anyone know the story characters of Gerald the Elephant and Piggie? I guess there are lots of these stories. The one that G and I are going to read is called <i>Waiting Is Not Easy</i> , by Mo Willems.. If you want to come up close and sit on the rug, you may. The rule is no touching anyone else except if it's your parent. G and I are going to be the characters in the book, and we actually won't be showing the illustrations until the end. I will be Gerald the Elephant and he is Piggie. (show first page) Okay, here we go. |
| Leader | 10:55 | So, what was it that was the big surprise? Why did they have to wait? It seems sometimes that we have to wait for lots of things, and it's not easy. What are some of the things that seem hard to wait for? |
| Activity Leader | 11:00 | We're going to do a game called a continuum. I hope everyone will play. H and I are standing behind the last row of chairs and they have an invisible line between them that goes behind the last row of chairs. They are going to be magnets. Each one will have something they represent and you will decide how attracted you are to that, for instance, I love chocolate, I hate chocolate, where would you be on that line, _____. Like that. Any Questions? So let's all stand up and I'll tell you the first choice. - H is "I am fairly patient when I have to wait for something." I is "I don't ever like to wait for anything." (middle) (okay, put yourself on the line where you feel) - I is "I can hardly wait for summer". H is "I waited for spring and I like it better than summer." (each time we do it, ask for comments of why you are where you are) - H is "I can hardly wait for my birthday". I is "I think birthdays come around pretty fast, I am not waiting". (we do it) - I is "In Meeting for Worship, I feel like I'm waiting." H is "In Meeting for Worship there is always something happening, even if it's just inside of me. I am not waiting." (we do it) |

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| | | Everyone goes back to their seats. |
| Leader | 11:15 | <p>Now we are going to go into our worship time. If you would like to be on the rug, that's fine, but remember that you aren't touching anyone unless it's your parent. A good stable way to sit is with your bottom on the floor and your legs crossed.</p> <p>We always wonder how to go into worship in a good way, and since we're talking about waiting, and our form of worship is also called waiting worship, I wonder how we can experience that together. You see, one thing that we are waiting for in worship, which comes sometimes, is that feeling of connection with everyone else. It's the spirit of God in you that connects to the spirit of God in other people. It's something we share.</p> <p>So for our worship today I'm going to try an experiment.</p> <p>I have this ball of yarn. I am hoping that we can use this yarn to connect all of us. The way we will do that is that I'll take the ball of yarn, wrap it around my finger, and then pass the ball on to the next person.</p> <p>I keep holding on to my piece of the yarn and I pass the ball very carefully. I will try not to pull it too tightly with the next person, so they can hold on easily.</p> <p>We all want to get the ball, so we will wait quietly until the ball comes to us.</p> <p>While the ball is going around, you can imagine how we are all being knit together.</p> <p>Maybe you will be able to feel the energy that connects us in the yarn. We are all being held together in God's love. God leads us in worship.</p> <p>We will breathe slowly and slow down. We will relax here in the Spirit. If you receive a message during our time, you can speak it.</p> <p>At the end of worship I will use my free hand to do a handshake.</p> |
| All/Leader | 11:30 | <p>Breaking meeting:</p> <p>Thank you. Now we need to start the ball in the other direction and roll up the yarn. While we are doing that, I wonder if J, who is a poet herself, could read a poem called Patient Trust. I think it relates to waiting.</p> <p>Does anyone have something to share about today?</p> |
| | 11:40 | <p>Announcements: Christa, the retreat Potluck, so we need to get chairs put to the side.</p> |

Patient Trust

Above all, trust in the slow work of God.

We are quite naturally impatient in everything
to reach the end without delay.

We should like to skip the intermediate stages.

We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new.

And yet it is the law of all progress

that it is made by passing through

some stages of instability—

and that it may take a very long time.

And so I think it is with you;

your ideas mature gradually—let them grow,

let them shape themselves, without undue haste. Don't try to force them on,

as though you could be today what time

(that is to say, grace and circumstances

acting on your own good will)

will make of you tomorrow.

Only God could say what this new spirit gradually forming within you will be. Give Our

Lord the benefit of believing that his hand is leading you,

and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself in suspense and incomplete.

—Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, SJ

Sample Lesson D - Loaves and Fishes, Sharing

| Who | When | What |
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| Leader | 10:30 | Welcome! Nametags. Thanks for coming, glad you're here. Review worship plan. We're going to start with singing, led by _____. |
| Song Leader | 10:35 | Singing probably four songs. Allelu, If You're Happy and You Know It, Sing, Sing and Rejoice, I've Got a River of Light |
| Song Leader | 10:45 | Thank you! Welcome again. So today, since we're all feeling new, it's especially nice if we can find someone to meet who we haven't met before. For the next five minutes, can you, in groups of three or four or five, introduce yourself – say your name – and then tell the others in your group about something you remember about this last summer that was fun or interesting. It's two things: your name and something about your summer. Go! |
| Leader | 10:55 | I have a story today about sharing. It's about hungry people and how one little boy decided to help. It's a story in the Bible that people just call The Loaves and the Fishes. When we have a potluck here at Meeting, and people get worried that we don't have enough food, other people say, "Don't worry. It's always like the Loaves and the Fishes." Somehow there's always enough. |
| Activity Leader | 11:00 | We're going to listen to the story and then each person will get to think about what it was like to be in the story. This is a story about Jesus. He became famous where he lived as someone who was a good teacher and also someone who cured many people from being sick. One day, he was out in the countryside, a big open place, teaching and curing people. There were so many people – 5000 men and women and children. If we had 5000 people here, it would be more than 100 times as many as we are this morning. If we went outside, we wouldn't even fit in the Longfellow Park. We would be overflowing! So many people wanted to be near Jesus. Well, it was getting late in the day, and Jesus' helpers, called disciples, came to Jesus and said, "Jesus, I think the people need to eat and so we should tell them to go to the nearby villages and buy food." Jesus said, "Don't send them away. Give them something to eat!" They said, "We don't have that kind of money!! There is only this boy here who has five loaves of bread and two fish that he is offering, but what is that for so many!" And Jesus said, "Bring the food here to me. Have the people sit down." So all 5000 people sat down. Jesus took the loaves and the fishes and gave thanks to God. Then he gave them to the helpers, the disciples, to distribute to the crowd. |

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| | | <p>The story doesn't tell how it happened, but everyone had enough to eat!</p> <p>Then he told the disciples to gather up the leftovers. There were twelve baskets full of leftovers!</p> <p>The people got excited and said, this must be an important prophet! See what happened!</p> <p>Jesus had to leave then, because he was afraid the people would try to make him king!</p> |
| All/Leader | 11:00 | <p>This is called a miracle story, because it's something unusual that happened, something people can't explain easily. I think miracles are meant to tell us something about how God is, what the Spirit of Life can do. Some people think that the reason there was so much food was that when the boy decided to share his food, other people who had food with them decided to share, too. In those times, usually you just took care of your own family. You wouldn't share food with people who were not your family. But something touched people's hearts, maybe it was Jesus' teaching, and they became open-hearted and generous to everyone, even people who were not their family.</p> |
| | | <p>Now my helpers are going to hand out pieces of paper. The paper will give you a part.</p> <p>They are:</p> <p>Jesus.</p> <p>The boy with the loaves and fishes.</p> <p>The disciples</p> <p>The rest of the people.</p> <p>If you want to be in a group with your parent, you can both pick just one part.</p> |
| | | <p>Okay, I'm going to tell the story again. This time close your eyes and pretend you are the part that you picked.</p> |
| | | <p>(tell the story again)</p> |
| | 11:10 | <p>Okay, open your eyes, and find the rest of the people here who have your part.</p> <p>I have questions for each group. We will come back together in about 7 or 8 minutes.</p> <p>Each group can eat their loaves and fishes snack while you answer the questions.</p> <p>Don't worry if you can't find a good answer for the question. If you have other questions, ask them, too.</p> |
| | | <p><i>Jesus:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Why didn't you just send the people away to get food?</i> 2. <i>How do you feel about helping so many people?</i> 3. <i>Did anything surprise you?</i> 4. <i>Why do you think the people want to make you king?</i> |
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| | | <p><i>The Boy:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. Why were you there?</i> <i>2. Why did you decide to offer your food?</i> <i>3. How did it make you feel when Jesus used your food to feed so many?</i> |
| | | |
| | | <p><i>The disciples:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. What made you notice that the people were hungry?</i> <i>2. How did you feel when Jesus said, "feed them yourself!"</i> <i>3. Did anything surprise you?</i> |
| | | |
| | | <p><i>The people:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. Why were you there?</i> <i>2. Did you bring food with you?</i> <i>3. How did you feel when the little boy gave Jesus his food to use?</i> <i>4. Did anything surprise you?</i> |
| | 11:18 | Did anyone find anything surprising or interesting in their group that they'd like to tell the rest of us? |
| | | (someone starts pulling shades on windows to dim the light) I suggest we stretch before settling into some silent worship together. |
| | | <p>Our worship here is a special thing. It is our chance to listen to God and to still our bodies</p> <p>I will light a candle in a moment. This candle reminds us that God's spirit is always with us.</p> <p>I will say something about light, and we will all be quiet for a while. If you want to sit on the rug, you sit in a special way. That way is with your bottom on the floor and your legs crossed in front of you. You can probably cross more of your legs than I can. Your hands are in your lap. If you want to come sit like this, you can sit here, close to the candle.</p> <p>To get ready, I'd like everyone to sit and breathe through your nose. Feel the air come in and out. In and out. Breathe slowly. Slow down. Slow down. Close your eyes. Follow your breath into your lungs. Feel it go in and out. Feel your chest get big and then small. Big and small. Shoulders relax. Keep your eyes closed.</p> <p>Now open your eyes. Find the candle light. How does it look to you? Look very closely. Does it move? It is warm. Imagine how the warmth of this candle is warming you. Look at the candle, then close your eyes and see if you can keep the picture of the candle on the back of your eyelids. Try for as long as you can. If you need to look at the candle again, open your eyes and</p> |

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| | | <p>then close them again.</p> <p>Look at the candle again. Flames are like God and like love. We can never know everything about light and love. It's a mystery. Jesus was called the light of the world. He was full of light and love.</p> <p>Close your eyes and bring that light inside, to your heart, right in the middle of your chest, where you are breathing. Love is the center of you, and it makes you warm.</p> <p>Now imagine it spreading through your body. Feel the warmth of love flowing through you. You are full of light, full of love. You are making a big pool of love around you. Think about people you love and pull them into this light and love. They are warm and happy. Think about anyone you know who is having a hard time, who is sad or in trouble. Pull them into this pool of love, too.</p> <p>Stay with them, if you can. If you come back, sit quietly and look at the candle again.</p> <p>This candle is like the love that is always near you. It is like God's care, your parent's care, your teacher's care. You can be happy that love is always ready for you.</p> |
| | 11:35 | (shake hands) Thank you everyone. Are there thoughts that anyone wants to share about worship this morning? |
| | | announcements. |
| | | Can I have young volunteers to take the baskets of loaves and fishes to help feed our multitude? |
| | | Thank you! |