

Passages:

A Guide to Developing a Coming-of-Age Program for Quaker Youth

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with assistance from
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Introduction

Many faiths mark the transition of young people to teenage/adult status with a special process: learning, performance or ceremony. Quakers do not have a particular tradition for doing this. Some Friends have felt a yearning to honor this transition within their monthly meeting, and various programs have been developed by individual meetings on an ad hoc basis. The purpose of this guide is to offer resources, imaginings and encouragement to assist those meetings that would like to take up such a process with and for their young people. In Quaker tradition, we do not offer a prescription for a specific program but we hope that this guide helps those interested to design a program that fits their own community. In the appendix are specific structures which you are free to adapt to your meeting's needs.

Su Hansen, a member of Ann Arbor Friends Meeting in Michigan, facilitated the development of a program in 1998 which was called Passages. (A link to Su's reflections on Passages is provided in the resources section of the appendix.) Several meetings in New England Yearly Meeting (NEYM) have used the Ann Arbor Friends Meeting program as a guide and have developed structured Passages programs. Other meetings and families within meetings have found less formal ways to acknowledge our young people as they come of age. We welcome the sharing of experiences and the development of any number of creative celebrations of Passages. This guide will focus especially on the development of a committed multi-week Passages program as laid out by Su and her group, as we have found this structure to be very fruitful.

First, we need to acknowledge the obstacles to organizing a Passages program. These days, young people and adults alike are very busy with their daily lives, and a commitment to a multi-week program might seem more than they can take on. First Day Schools focus on younger children but few meetings offer a carefully considered program for teens beyond asking them to help with First Day School or child care activities. Also, Quakers historically do not observe formal ceremonies, so recognition of coming of age might not be seen as important. There is no clear age or stage at which our children are fully grown. Yet we all know that the teen and pre-teen years are crucial in establishing one's spiritual values and identity. Many people are yearning to find a way to honor our young people in their spiritual paths and encourage them as they make the transition to adulthood. We have found personally that the benefits of a Passages program, including the joys in finding and building a stronger community to include our young people, far outweigh the cost.

Benefits and Considerations

What might a Passages program provide our community? Among the gifts of such a program, we have found the following:

- A celebration of young people's independent spiritual choices, and a safe place for them to explore these choices
- A strong statement to young people that their ministry is welcomed by their meeting on a par with that of adults
- Adult mentors and guides to support them in long-term friendships and a shared spiritual journey
- Development of an ongoing Quaker peer group, including those young people who are peripheral and perhaps not involved (friends of Friends)
- A fruitful engagement that enriches the spirituality of all involved, including the entire meeting

What are some advisable **elements** of a Passages program? First, there need to be at least two adults who can work together to plan and facilitate the program. Though it is natural for these adults to be parents of the young people who will be the participants, it is helpful if some other adults can share the load. Input from other adults also tells the kids that this is not just another obligation being foisted on them by their parents!

Early on, **consider how much to involve the young people** in the development of the program. We found with our first group that there was some resistance to the idea on the part of the young people. ("Will this program be cool enough for me?") We decided to structure the program without their involvement, and let them in very slowly on the surprise, keeping many elements of the program a mystery. This created a sense of excitement that quickly overcame the resistance. Other meetings might choose to set up an ad hoc group, even including some or all of the young people. We do caution against too large a planning group which can bog down the process. Two to four people can easily plan the program in a meeting or two. Ideally, these planners know the young people individually and can craft a program that responds to their interests, talents and needs.

Overall structure

The **structure** of a formal Passages curriculum should include a commitment to at least 12 sessions, over at least 12 weeks. Don't be scared off by this; do what works for you and your meeting. On the other hand, it's not as hard as it sounds, especially if ice cream is involved! One-time or occasional Passages celebrations are a good alternative for meetings that do not want to undertake a formal Passages program. (See such alternative ideas in the appendix.) We found that a special weeknight meeting at a member's home with a strong intention on the part of each to attend all the sessions made for a cohesive group and a trusting atmosphere. The addition of a sleepover or retreat at the meetinghouse, inter-visitation to other meetings and/or other faiths can be wonderful group elements.

We have found that the best structure includes some of each of the following: **education, service and performance**. The group sessions can combine these three elements, and the young people can each take on a particular topic for independent study, within the bounds of a theme or curriculum chosen by the group (examples might be Quaker testimonies, Quaker history or Quakerism compared to other major religions). For the service portion, each participant or the group could choose a short service project to offer to the broader community, such as planning and facilitating a meal in a community meals program, starting a Quaker pen-pal program for the First Day School students, or starting a vegetable garden at the meetinghouse. At the conclusion of the curriculum, each participant presents some aspect of what they have learned to the meeting as a whole, in a meeting for worship format. The meeting may be interested to host an all-meeting ceremony and celebration to honor the young people and their accomplishment.

Whatever structure is used, it is important to make the program playful and participatory. Active discussion, not lectures, should be the norm. Grounding in Quaker worship is crucial. It might be tempting to bring in programs from other faiths, such as Jewish, Unitarian Universalist or Native American traditions. But we suggest that the program should spring mainly from Quaker methods: worship, individual and group discernment, and learning about Quaker history, traditions and practices. Borrowing from other traditions does not need to be a central part of a Passages program.

Age Range

What **age range** should be included? This will depend primarily on the meeting's size. Small meetings might have a broad age range (between 12 and 16 for example) or partner with a nearby meeting. Larger meetings could consider a narrower age-grouping. A group of two or three young people is large enough. The junior high years are a time that most young people consider fundamental questions about their lives and beliefs. They have more time available than in high school, and so we recommend focusing on the junior high age group (ages 12 - 14) in particular. Inviting non-Quaker friends of participants can serve to expand the number of teens in the program as well as providing a successful outreach method for the meeting as a whole.

Care should be taken as with all educational programs to respect youth's different abilities, gifts and learning styles. A broader age range can help to free up the expectations of youth who might be very different in their reading skills. Most important is an accepting attitude and support from mentors and facilitators. For those who are not academically inclined, it is important to ensure that the program does not feel like school. Materials can be offered by reading aloud or using audiovisual curricula. The section **Individual Project Ideas** below lists some specific project ideas for individuals to consider, focusing on different types of learning styles.

Mentors

A time-tested practice used by many meetings is the choice of a **mentor** for each young person. Frequently, young people choose and invite their own mentor to be part of the Passages program. We have found that mentors are honored to be invited to join the program and typically fulfill their commitment to participate in each meeting. The mentor can assist the young person especially with their individual educational program and report. During group sessions, the group can be broken up into mentor/young person pairs to work individually at the same location. (Child safety considerations must be kept in mind if mentors are encouraged to take the young person on individual outings.) We found that these pair relationships often become very strong and continue long beyond the program.

Choosing a Theme

The facilitators, perhaps with the assistance of a broader group, should choose an **overall theme** for the program to provide an educational focus. Examples of themes include Quakers around the world, the testimonies, Quaker methods (including silent and spoken ministry, meeting for business and clearness committees), Quakerism compared to other faiths or worldwide Quaker organizations. A group that includes non- Quakers or those new to Quakerism must take care not to assume too much knowledge that might leave some behind, or might seem to proselytize too much. Educational elements could include a reading to read aloud or silently and then discuss, a film, or a guest lecturer. We caution against providing homework, aside from a final project which can be prepared partly during the final sessions. Individual journals are an excellent idea. If they are used, it is advisable to schedule time during the sessions to write in them, as otherwise it probably won't happen.

Individual Project Ideas

In general, when you select a topic for your program, look to where you feel Spirit is most needed or is engaging you most. Be guided by your heart as much as your head. What interests you is best! One of the Passages participants we know wrote an essay comparing The Force in Star Wars to the Inner Light! Choose an activity that allows you to concentrate in the area you most prefer, or alternatively, an area that you want to learn to do better. Some possibilities include:

- Quaker testimonies and practices around the world
- How you might live out one of the testimonies, now and as an adult
- Describe what Quakers can offer the world
- Learn about and report on issues of racial justice/diversity
- Experiment with and report on different meditational practices
- Read and compare versions of the Bible
- Read and report on other spiritually oriented texts
- Dealing with death
- Create a project of environmental sustainability for your home or meeting

- Learn and recount stories of faith and faithful living from your family's past
- Learn about and observe corporate discernment in action at your meeting or in the wider Quaker community
- Translate some articles from Friends Journal into Spanish and share with Spanish-speaking friends
- Attend JHYM or YF retreat and/or NEYM sessions and/or FGC and report back on it
- Interview some Quakers whom you respect about their faith journeys
- Create and share your own statement of faith or faith journey
- Perform a musical or dramatic performance for meeting about Quakers
- Create artwork that expresses your spiritual values
- Learn and teach some number of songs from Worship in Song to meeting
- Research the wider world of Friends: FWCC, FUM, FGC, EFI, RSWR, USFW
- Organize a family trip to Philadelphia to see Quaker sites
- Experience the different forms of Quaker worship (Programmed, Unprogrammed, Conservative and Evangelical)

Beyond Passages

What can our group do **after Passages is over**? Celebrate the completion of Passages! Honor participants and mentors with a certificate, offer a potluck meal, post pictures on the meeting's website or Facebook group. Take time to assess the program: what worked best? What could be changed next time? Mentor/young person teams can be an ongoing source of support for both members of the pair. Occasional reunions can reinforce this. We have noticed that an ongoing program over some years (even if it is offered only occasionally) establishes expectations among young people: anticipation encourages participation.

Most important, a Passages program can help a meeting to consider how young people can be a more vital part of the meeting community. Our meetings may need to adapt to be ready to receive the contributions of young people. Is Passages an opening for some to adult membership? Might they be interested in serving on a committee or helping to host meeting for worship? We could all consider how our meetings in turn could better accommodate and welcome young people. Do committees and events meet at accessible times for them? Do we give them leadership opportunities? How can we structure peer opportunities within our meetings for young people? How can we support them as they come of age as young Quakers in a complicated world?

Please be in touch with us and share your experiences with Passages. We'd love to know about what you have learned in supporting and nurturing your youth at this important transition time.

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 Judi Campbell (roroyare@hotmail.com)

Appendix

Resources for Passages Programs

- Beardall, Nancy, Stephen Bergman, and Janet Surrey. Making Connections: Building Community and Gender Dialogue in Secondary Schools. Cambridge, MA: Educators for Social Responsibility. 2007. (A good resource for the Passages planners/facilitators on building community and creating a supportive environment for youth through mindfully making relationship connections and seeing their power.)
- Black, W. Geoffrey, P. Zion Klos, Claire Reddy, Milam Smith and Rachel Stacy, Eds. Whispers of Faith: Young Friends Share Their Experiences of Quakerism. A Project of QUIP. Philadelphia: Quaker Press of FGC. 2005. (Out of print. See your Meeting Library or used book sellers on-line.)
- Conti, Angelina, et al. Spirit Rising: Young Quaker Voices. A QUIP Publication. (Quakers United in Publication.) Philadelphia: Quaker Press of FGC. 2010.
- Fluegelman, Andrew. Editor. The New Games Book. San Francisco: A Headlands Press Book. 1976. See also: Silver Bullets A Revised Guide to Initiative Problems, Adventure Games, and Trust Activities. By Project Adventure, 2009.
- Geoghegan, Jeffrey and Michael Homan. The Bible for Dummies. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Publishing Company. 2003.
- Hansen, Su. "Coming of Age in a Quaker Community: Passages So Far." Presented at the Friends General Conference Religious Educators Institute. 2004. (To see description, use this link www.neym.org/REResources and look under "For Passages Workshop" and select "Passages: Coming of Age in a Quaker Community .")
- Krahenbuhl, Lee. Bad News, Good News: The Prophets Speak Truth to Power. Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press. 1998. Part of the "Generation Why Bible-based Explorations of Issues Facing Youth". (An interactive curriculum on the prophets that you might want to use as a piece of your Passages program.)
- Kreidler, William J. Conflict Resolution in the Middle School: A Curriculum and Teacher's Guide. Cambridge, MA: Educators for Social Responsibility. 1997. (Excellent and engaging concepts and activities guiding middle schoolers to accept conflict as a normal part of life and move to self-awareness of their role in it and then to skills for resolving or transforming conflict. Kreidler was a Friend and a superlative curriculum writer.)
- MacBeth, Sybil. Praying in Color: Drawing a New Path to God. Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press. 2001.

Molina-Markham, Elizabeth. Listening Faithfully with Friends: An Ethnography of Quaker Communication Practices. Ph.D. Thesis for the Department of Communication, University of Massachusetts, Amherst. May 2011. (To see selected chapters, use this link www.neym.org/REResources and look under "For Passages Workshop" and select "Listening Faithfully with Friends.")

Opening Doors to Quaker Worship. A publication of the Religious Education Committee. Of Friends General Conference. Philadelphia. 1994. (Still a classic resource though out of publication. Check your Meeting's library or on-line used book sellers.)

NIV/The Message Parallel Bible. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. 2004. New International Version, 1984. The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language. By Eugene Petersen. 2002. (This is a great resource for exploring the Bible. A traditional version and Eugene Petersen's translation into contemporary English appear side-by-side on each page. Looking at both often helps a fresh understanding to emerge.)

Peace Educators in the United States. Making Peace Where I Live: A Project Designed for Young People to meet Peacemakers and Peacebuilders in their Own Communities. (Prepared by Elise Boulding, Cynthia Cohen, Gail Jacobson, Lyn Haas, and Mary Lee Morrison.) (Revised 2008)
<http://www.brandeis.edu/ethics/peacebuildingarts/pdfs/MakingpeacewhereIlive.pdf>

Wezeman, Phyllis Vos. When did we see You? Sixty Creative Activities to Help Fourth to Eighth Graders Recognize Jesus Today. Notre Dame, in: Ave Maria Press. 1994. (May serve as the structure of a service-oriented curriculum. Good as a jumping off point. Language and specific activities may not feel comfortable for some Friends.)

Youth Retreat Handbook. NEYM Christian Education Committee. 1996. (Look for an updated version coming soon from the Youth Programs Committee of New England Yearly Meeting.)

Films may be another wonderful resource for your Passages Program. Just to get you thinking, see a few possibilities,
<http://www.neym.org/REResources/ToolBox/filmnights.html>.

Sample curriculum:

AMESBURY MONTHLY MEETING, NOVEMBER 2004 TO FEBRUARY, 2005

Summary: For the first (pilot) program, there were 3 passagers, ranging in age from 11 to 15. Sessions were held at facilitators' (the parents) homes. The 4 Quaker testimonies provided the backbone of structure, with 2 sessions held on each testimony. Alternating weeks were spent in reading and reviewing curriculum and in more playful activities. Each passager chose a mentor from the meeting who attended the sessions and assisted the passager with completion of 2 projects: a service project of her/his own choosing and an educational project also of his/her own choosing. The projects were presented at the final event, a called meeting for worship.

Sessions typically began and ended with a short period of centering worship (after enjoyment of tea and cookies of course). Passagers kept personal journals and were encouraged to write down their thoughts. Ideally, a quiet period of writing time would be held each week at the end of the session to allow for personal reflection, but we seldom found time for that.

Session 1 - Introduction to the process.

Mentors and passagers as well as facilitators met to discuss overall plan.

Sessions 2 and 3: Simplicity

2: Curriculum on simplicity offered and discussed

3: Film *Rufus Jones* presented with discussion on how RJ's life reflected his family's Quaker philosophy, particularly simplicity

3: Build-your-own ice cream sundae and describe how your construction reflects your own sense of order.

Sessions 4 and 5: Equality

4: Curriculum on equality offered and discussed; also reading marked passages from A Procession of Quakers that deal with equality. Participants took on the role that they had read and explained to others in 1 on 1 discussions what had led them to that witness.

5: Film *Free Indeed* presented with discussion on racism and particularly white privilege.

Sessions 6 and 7: Integrity

6: Curriculum on integrity offered and discussed.

7: Film *The Kid* presented with discussion on issues of integrity.

Weekend retreat:

Overnight at the meetinghouse, 3 pm to 6:30 am. Discussion of curriculum on Mary Dyer, baking of bread, creation of self-portraits showing people and experiences that have helped us to develop as spiritual individuals, creation of our own recipes for our future spiritual development. Attendance at Martin Luther King breakfast early in the morning.

Session 8: Mid-session review

A time to review the concepts discussed to date and to reflect on them in our own lives. Journal writing and worship time.

Sessions 9 and 10: Non-Violence

9: Curriculum on non-violence offered and discussed

10: Role play: threshing session in a NE Quaker Meeting on offering sanctuary to a Central American family suffering from political violence in the 1980s, viewing of film The Good War and Those who Refused to Fight it.

Session 11: Final review

Writing of individual letters to George Fox, explaining to him what we know about Quakerism today and some of the elements that have shaped our faith since his time, as well as reflecting on how our own beliefs are different or similar to the faith of Quakers who have come before us.

Session 12: Preparation for presentation

Presentation: called meeting for worship with presentations by passagers, followed by potluck luncheon and celebration outing for participants and mentors.

FINAL CELEBRATION: ICE CREAM OUTING FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS!

(PUTNAM'S PANTRY)

Participant Reactions

A mentor's experience:

“I participated in the Passages Program twice. I don't know how the experience was for the young people involved but I found that as an adult Quaker it was some of the most educational and rewarding work I have done. It was an opportunity to learn more about Quakerism and other religions as well as a nice inter-generational space to be in.

I also think it has played an important role in helping our young people make the transition from childhood to teenage hood! I won't say adulthood because I feel that comes a little later in life. Most societies have a Passage ritual or tradition of some sort whereas our society does not. It is important for young people to know that their elders recognize and celebrate their journey through life.

But again, I think my primary emphasis would be on how the process is beneficial to the adults involved as well as the children!”

Ed Mair Amesbury Monthly Meeting

A facilitator's experience:

“As First Day School (FDS) Clerk for Amesbury Friends, I used “PASSAGES”, a program designed for youth at a time of passage from childhood to adulthood. The curriculum we chose to cover was the study of the Religions of the World. Our plan was ambitious, but with the enthusiastic cooperation of volunteer FDS leaders (teachers), parents, guest speakers and mentors (chosen by each student), it was very rewarding. From the beginning we knew we had to remain flexible, being sensitive to what was working and what we needed to change to succeed.

To introduce PASSAGES we invited Friends, guests, FDS students to a meeting to explain the concept and what would be required of students (Passagers), mentors and parents. This was followed by a second meeting with a brief presentation by a guest speaker on the Five World Religions followed by questions and answers.

The program that we followed included Thursday night sessions in leader's homes along with field trips often scheduled on the weekend. Videos of different faith practices were shown and guests from these faiths were invited to speak. Passagers were required to select a mentor, an adult who would be willing to attend many of the events and to advise them in their final project.

The lesson plans prepared for the teachers were based on the text we were using. These outlines were never intended to be used exactly as prepared, but teachers did find them useful. I would encourage preparing these outlines as time-savers answering many basic questions about what should be included in a lesson and in what order other teachers were using.

We also had a complementary program, for the regular FDS program, with a less demanding curriculum. We gave the PASSAGES students the option to work on their journals or join the younger students during these classes. Without exception they chose to join in with the younger students. As a result these classes were well attended and very successful, with the Passagers often playing a leadership role, which benefited both age groups.

The program planned was to cover three areas: Education, Service and Presentation. As the education schedule of this curriculum was very demanding, and our students were engaged in service projects outside of the PASSAGES program, it became clear that the service requirement would be too difficult to include. The presentation for graduation, which was to be worked on throughout the time period, was left to the last weeks of the program. Although this did put a burden on the mentors in the final week, it was the most appropriate use of the passagers time.

There is no question that in implementing PASSAGES for your youth you will discover even more ways to add to the program already shown to work so well with our youth and within the community.”

Peg McIntosh Amesbury Meeting FDS Clerk 2008-2009

A Participant's Experience

“The passages program at the Amesbury Monthly Meeting was a great experience for me. Its focus on different religions from around the world helped me gain new understanding of cultures and beliefs. We did not just skim over a religion rather we dove in, examining it from many angles. This meant up to a month of research, meeting with religious leaders and followers living in our community, and attending a wide variety of religious services. While doing this research I found that almost all religions are very similar, with a theme of trying to help others, and make a better planet for us all. While sometimes a religious leader will spread a message of intolerance or hate, it is almost always in contradiction with the original teachings of the religion. Passages was a help for both my spiritual advancement and the advancement of my global understanding, and I would definitely recommend it.”

August Umholtz Amesbury Monthly Meeting

Other Kinds of Coming of Age Experiences

Jesse's Coming of Age

"It all started with A Fine Young Man: What Parents, Mentors and Educators Can Do to Shape Adolescent Boys into Exceptional Men, by Michael Gurian. Jesse is certainly an exceptional man. Now 25, he is a loving, independent, bull-headed, son-of-a-gun ... and I guess I'm the gun. When Jesse was 12 this book jumped at me from the shelf. It is nothing about shaping these adolescent boys into the men we want them to be. It's all about allowing them to grow in love and giving fathers and mothers a well told physiological, psychological, and cultural context to help us understand what's happening. From another point of view I might say "to better understand what they're up against."

I also recommend this book because having read it, there is no way the reader could conceive of a child's "Coming of Age" as a ceremony. It's a process. While this may seem obvious to process minded Quakers, one could very easily become ensnared in planning an event without taking the whole process into consideration. With this supreme caveat and out of the necessity imposed by time and space, I turn my attention to the event that unfolded for Jesse.

His 13th birthday fell in the month of March. Birthdays were often marked by ice cream and cake fueled young guys digging out tunnels in mounds of snow and attacking one another with intense yet joyful warrior passion. But those years were passed. What lay ahead was a mystery to us both. I'd forgotten, and he had yet to learn. In the preceding months I had read the Gurian book and determined that this time in Jesse's life called out for a milestone. Such a marker would be infused with import for this time, with a community expression of support for Jesse and confidence in his promise. It would be a celebration but also a charge. Somehow though, it needed to be a natural extension of our family life. If it felt forced, it would feel fake. In fact, it would be. And if teenagers as a group are known for any particular quality, acuity in crap detection is one.

Planning the guest list. Jesse was fortunate to have a number of men who were important to him as he grew up, and most lived near by. He had a dad and a brother, Chris, seven years his senior. Two uncles, Doug, my bro who would have to travel seven hours to be present, and Chuck, my bro-in-law who also made his home in New Hampshire. Jesse had a best friend from the days before memory whose parents were almost a second home and family for Jesse; Steve, the second dad, was the one who first took Jesse to fish at the back ponds. Graham was a family friend, like an uncle to Jesse and member of Concord Meeting. Graham and family joined us for summer vacations and celebrations of all important events. It was Graham, seven years my senior, who taught me the value of these milestones and that it is our shared lives in community that make them possible. There was "Uncle" Al, my cousin, as playful as a kid, for whom maintaining family connections was as natural as breathing. And Rich, First Day School teacher, and friend. Mild has we may have

been, that was a whole ton of testosterone to assemble. With Jesse we made nine.

Planning the date. Getting nine of us together was going to be a challenge so advance planning became key. Unbeknownst to Jesse we set the date months in advance. The most practical time was in the summer, a time that would seem to work best for all and to get Chris home from college and Doug up from Pennsylvania. I had to give up on the idea of linking this with a birthday. The actual date was not as significant as this general time in Jesse's life.

Planning the focus. We had something to say to Jesse. I had no clue what it would be. He needed to begin to prove himself a man. But how? What could have an element of fear of the unknown for Jesse? An element of mystery? Physical challenge? And yet be safe from my vantage point. How would we also ensure our time together would be of the highest quality and not devolve into platitudes, men one-upping one another, or worse yet, aimless grunting and belly scratching? First of all, this was a very cool group of guys. The answers to these questions lay in trusting that we, Jesse's male mentors, would figure it out. It was our job to do what needed doing. By agreeing to show up we each acknowledged a responsibility to Jesse and that our lives were inextricably and inexplicably intertwined.

We were familiar with the woods and the mountains. In New Hampshire they are the backdrop to our lives. And so it was that they naturally became the primary set in this play of three acts that arose with unexpected clarity.

Act One - The Test. Here's how it played out. Jesse was told that a special event was planned for the day and to not make other plans. All would be revealed in due time. The day began early. Jesse and I were up at 6:00 and on the road to the White Mountains for the Liberty Spring Trail to climb Mount Liberty out of Franconia Notch. I did so with deep trepidation as the sky was heavy with low clouds and the forecast for the north country was iffy at best. It was about a 2000 foot ascent, very steep with granite boulders as stairs in many places. What Jesse did not know was that he was fully capable of making this climb independently. He was familiar with following trails. He has always been well in tune with his whereabouts and getting from point A to point B, whether in the city or in the woods.

Independently, and on a schedule beginning one half hour earlier, the other men headed out to the same location, and headed up the trail. At intervals along the way, one would drop off at a comfortable spot, to allow the others to move along and to await Jesse's arrival. They were strung out, each as a pearl on the string. Each had taken time to consider what wisdom they felt they would want to share with Jesse. Of course, each knew him well enough to know what he might be ready to hear given the circumstance of the moment. They also brought a token to give Jesse as a symbolic representation of their brief time together on the mountainside and, to an extent, their lives together. To this day I do not know what transpired in these conversations along the trail. They were private. Truth be told, I'll bet Jesse's

memory of them is vague. No matter. For Jesse to have the specific words in their context is not the point. I have no doubt that the ultimate meaning of those conversations is firmly embedded in who Jesse is today.

As we locked up the car and shouldered our day packs, the air was chilly and moist. The sky offered just sufficient hope to press on. We hiked along a new stretch of trail before joining the Liberty Spring Trail, a stretch of the Appalachian Trail. Here New Hampshire offered up its unique challenges to the “through hikers” from Georgia. I had no doubt Jesse could find this trail junction and take the right trail, but I needed to be 100 per cent sure. At this junction I dropped my pack and told Jesse that I would not be accompanying him. This was a test. He was incredulous. He must have asked me the same questions four or five different ways punctuated with pauses and consternation. His assignment was to hike to the peak and back. There would be surprises and adventures on the way. Careful not to speak falsely I simply remained silent when necessary. Mostly I asked that he simply trust me. He was capable and all would be well. But that was it. After what seemed to me an eternity of doubt, but had to have been only a few short minutes, Jesse hiked off up the trail. He passed the test. In about 15 minutes I followed him up as stealthily as I could.

Imagine his surprise after 20 minutes to round a bend and encounter a familiar friend, Rich. What an amazing coincidence! What was he doing here? In their conversation Rich revealed nothing of what was to come. I so wished to be a fly on the wall, but this was not my time. Rich sent Jesse on his way. The plan was for Rich to await my arrival and together we would trace Jesse’s steps up Mt. Liberty. As it turned out both Rich and Steve were unable to make the afternoon clear and had to hike down rather than up once Jesse had passed. It was their joy and honor to be involved to the extent they were able; and, so too, it was to Jesse’s clear benefit. Had our planning lacked flexibility we would have missed out on important contributions.

Once a discernable pattern had emerged in Jesse’s awareness, the initial fear and mystery must, necessarily, have given way to a growing sense of significance and depth. Eventually seven of us were assembled at the peak of Mt. Liberty. Huddled above tree line among ancient granite boulders and bedrock we paused not too long for a photo op. That photograph is among the most treasured possessions that I could count on one hand. A light but cold and wind driven sprinkle began so the band of brothers made its descent. The plan had been to spend some good time up there.

Back below tree line, not far at all below the peak, the AMC (Appalachian Mountain Club) maintained a campsite with platforms for tents under a hemlock canopy. There we came to the mutual decision that it would be safe to pause there for a meeting on one of the platforms.

Act Two - Worship Sharing. There we held what we Quakers know as worship sharing. Each in turn shared deeply from the heart. Why were we there? What did it

mean for us? Who were we to Jesse? What could this time in Jesse's life mean for him? What lay ahead? What lay behind? There were strong pauses... no answering back... no "I was just thinkin'" statements. It was all honest, direct, and true as truth can be. We knew that we made an essential group. We understood that we would be there for Jesse and each other. For weddings. For funerals. Indeed, today we number only six from that photo, and a tear catches me unprepared.

Act Three - Not Camping. The intense rain held off until we were in vehicles headed for home, the kind of rain that the wipers can barely manage. Yet we were prepared to camp the night in the bottom of the Notch. Climbing down the mountainside small conversations in twos and threes arose and faded as is the way on the trail. We eyed the weather and considered our options. Nothing could be gained from huddling through a storm in separate tents. That's what the rest of the day promised. To everyone's great relief we chose to head home and do supper together at the homestead.

Ruth, Jesse's mom, answered the phone there. "Could I invite Sue, Steve's wife and Jesse's second mom, to help with supper?" Surprise. One of my guiding principles all along was that this was an exclusively male operation, and this request was not according to plan. From my time living in West Africa I had grown accustomed to the notion that we men had secrets to share with our young men, secrets that the women could never know. It really did not matter that I had no idea what those secrets were. But we all benefit from those conditions that force our egos into retreat; that cause us to reevaluate and face reality on the ground. In this case, it was reality at the other end of the phone line.

The rain caused us to plan on the fly and brought this experience into the fuller context of family and extended family, with female energy balancing male energy. I was so glad that Sue and Ruth could provide and be there for dinner. We had great conversations, and they added so much. Steve was able to make it back for dinner and story telling, the main event of the evening. Jesse had the opportunity to recapitulate the day with others on his "most loved" list. Though not as I would have planned it, all fell into place as it needed to. We got into "Your awkward moment as a teenager." When we got to "Your first kiss" Ruth and Sue could see where this was headed and made their retreat citing "too much information." In fact they were deeply respectful of what was underway and needed no guidance from us. Years later Jesse referred to this day as "that thing you made me do when I was 13." I'm looking forward to sharing this writing with him and catching a glimpse of what it meant through the lens of a 25 year old."

Greg Heath Concord Monthly Meeting July 2012

Out of the Nest, Into the World

A Quaker Coming of Age Program

What is the mentoring program?

The Out of the Nest Quaker Mentoring Program pairs members of the **Ithaca Monthly Meeting of Friends** with teens 15 to 17 interested in exploring the role of Quakerism in their lives. Teen “nestlings” meet informally with their “mentors” one or more times a month over the course of one to two years to get to know each other, discuss Quakerism, and participate in a service project together. The purpose of the program is to help teens:

- understand Quaker values, practice, faith, and history
- help others by doing a service project
- experience using a Quaker Clearness Committee

Who is involved?

Teens can begin the program at age 15, but are welcome to join the program anytime between the ages of 15 and 17. Teens and their parents schedule meeting times and places with the mentor. The Out of the Nest Coordinator makes sure that the program is going smoothly and provides oversight if necessary.

What happens when?

The Quaker Mentoring program takes between one and two years.

Begin at the nestling’s 15th birthday

When a teen interested in Quakerism is about to turn 15, they and their parents should contact the Out of the Nest Coordinator. The Coordinator will help them and their parents identify a prospective mentor. When the mentor has been approved by CALM and M&W, the Out of the Nest Coordinator will schedule a check-in meeting with the nestling, mentor, and parents.

Within the first six months: study the Quaker Basics

Mentor and nestling meet a few times to get acquainted. Often meetings will take the form of a casual discussion over lunch. Next the mentor and nestling work out a schedule for studying the Quaker Basics, a six-part Quaker curriculum:

- Seeking the Spirit: The Inner Light and Meeting for Worship
- Seeking the Spirit: Spiritual Disciplines
- Leading a Quaker Life
- Living as a Quaker in the World: Peace and Nonviolence
- Living as a Quaker in the World: Equality and Social Justice

- Historical Roots of the Religious Society of Friends

Together the mentor and nestling complete the first half of Quaker Basics. They may also work on other Quaker-related projects, such as drafting a conscientious objector statement, taking field trips together, and attending Quaker events. At the half-way point the nestling and mentor check in with the Out of the Nest Coordinator and parents.

When the mentor and nestling finish the Quaker Basics curriculum there is a final check-in meeting with the Out of the Nest Coordinator and parents and then we celebrate the nestling completing the Quaker Basics.

Within the next six months: find a service project

Next the mentor, nestling, and support committee work together to identify an appropriate service project. They select a service project and get approval from parents, CALM, and M&W. Ithaca Monthly Meeting helps them raise funds. The mentor accompanies the nestling in completing the service project.

Within the last six months: do a service project

The mentor and nestling make travel arrangements, then go out into the world.

The goal of the service project is to:

- experience hands-on service work
- experience being away from home
- experience being without parents
- explore life goals
- be a Quaker in a non-Quaker place

At the end of the program: reach clarity about Quakerism

Upon return the nestling receives recognition by the Meeting, and they may also do a public presentation about their service project. The nestling then meets with a clearness committee to explore their relationship to Quakerism and how Ithaca Friends Meeting can support them. They also learn how to use a clearness committee for help making life decisions.

How to get involved:

If you are going to be fifteen soon:

Join the program. Contact someone on CALM or the Out of the Nest Coordinator. Contact information is listed below.

If you're a Meeting member or regular attender:

Be a mentor. If you are interested in serving as a mentor, contact someone on CALM or the Out of the Nest Coordinator listed below. Mentors must be approved by CALM,

M&W, and the nestling's family.

Help by driving. Nestlings often need transportation to Quaker events. Contact the Out of the Nest Coordinator listed below to volunteer to drive.

Help identify appropriate service projects. Contact the Out of the Nest Coordinator or one of the CALM committee members listed below to let them know about your project suggestion(s).

Contribute. Nestlings typically need about \$1000 to complete their service projects. The Meeting takes responsibility for raising money for the project, not the teens' family. Checks should be made out to "Ithaca Monthly Meeting" and earmarked "Out of the Nest Program." Send checks to the Meeting Treasurer Mike Simkin at 3137 Jacksonville Road, Trumansburg, NY 14886.

How to contact us:

Out of the Nest Coordinator:

Gina Varrichio, 272-2512, zealth_1@yahoo.com

CALM Committee:

Katherine Beissner, 280-1243, kb4plh@gmail.com

Mary Balfour, 273-5421, mbalfour123@gmail.com

Jeff deCastro, 387-3013, artlabs@earthlink.net

Ellie Rosenberg, 277-1024, ellierosenberg7@gmail.com

Sandra Steingraber, 387-3013, ssteingraber@ithaca.edu

Gina Varrichio, 272-2512, zealth_1@yahoo.com

Passages So Far

“In the fall of 1998, Ann Arbor Friends Meeting began its first Year of Passages, a school-year long program for young people approximately the age of seventh and eighth graders. Passages sought to acknowledge and support them in their transition from childhood to adulthood. We have had two groups since, one in 2000 and another in 2003. We have formed a group whenever we have had enough young people of those ages to create a meaningful program and have not left anyone out. Each group has had between ten and thirteen participants. We expect our next group will begin in 2006.”

Entire story available online at:
<http://www.neym.org/REResources/ToolBox/passages.html>

Su Hansen Ann Arbor Friends Meeting