

In the Middle of the *Light*

A Curated Resource
for Working with
Middle School Youth in
Quaker Meetings



**Philadelphia
Yearly Meeting**

In the Middle of the Light:

A Curated Resource for Working with Middle School Youth in Quaker Meetings

Welcome to this new resource, a “remix” of existing resources for Friends working with Middle School age youth in meetings!

Three reasons it was created — thinking about middle schoolers, meetings, and families:

1. **There are excellent curricular resources that have been created for middle school youth, but they may be overwhelming as a whole.** We’ve chosen ideas from them related to a monthly theme, and made suggestions; links to the full curricula are also provided, and you may find alternative ideas and resources in them that work for you. Mix around the monthly themes, use what works, and feel free to adapt things to meet the needs of your group!
2. **A frequent concern we hear from meetings is that middle school is when participation drops off for young people in meetings.** *We hear you, as parents and as youth workers.* The suggested idea with this resource is to plan for two weeks each month. Youth should know they are welcome to come to worship on other weeks. Another consideration is time — Is Sunday morning the only time to meet for the two sessions? Explore what times *work* for the youth in your meeting: Friday night? Sunday afternoon? How might a meal together support participation?
3. **The yearly meeting’s Middle School Friends program is rebooting in 2024!** Seeking to meet the needs of this age group, and recognizing the impact of the pandemic on their community, there will be two MSF gatherings to begin: at Fall Continuing Sessions (November 9, 2024) and the Camp Swatara retreat in May 2025. **Middle school-age youth are also welcome to participate in Family Meetups, Family Overnights, and 8th graders are invited to participate in the Young Friends program in the coming year.**

Watch the PYM calendar for more information about upcoming events: pym.org/events and make sure you’re subscribed to receive Youth Programs news!

We would love to hear how you use the materials shared here, and any additions you think would be helpful to others.

In service and joy,

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Resources Used in this Document:

“Quaker Affirmation” (Look for: “QA”)

<https://www.indyfriends.org/quaker-affirmation>

Created by Indianapolis First Friends Meeting for middle and high-school students, the curriculum was “developed as a way to guide and educate young Friends in their Quaker faith, similar to Confirmation Classes or Bar/Bat Mitzvah studies found in other faiths.” It is presented as a 10-month curriculum, with resources like PowerPoints and handouts to support discussions and activities, and we’ve picked from those for the monthly themes suggested. The curriculum includes exploring Quaker theology, history, and testimonies, and youth developing their own beliefs and spirituality. You will need to download a Student Manual, Teacher Manual, and Presentation Materials. (All are offered at no cost and are provided without representations or warranties of any kind.)

“A 7th Grade Quakerism Course” (Look for: “QC”)

<https://www.friendscouncil.org/resources/quaker-curricula>

(Use this link to find on the Friends Council on Education website, or email melinda@quakerfaithandplay.org to send to you.)

Created for use in Friends schools, some activities need minor adaptation for a meeting program. Covers basic beliefs and principles of Quakerism, including history, meeting for worship, Quaker testimonies, related biblical stories and symbolism, and exploring each person’s mission or calling to others.”

Faith & Play Stories

Available from QuakerBooks of FGC: <https://quakerbooks.org/collections/faith-and-play>

If no one in your meeting is trained to tell these stories, recordings of many stories can also be watched on YouTube, and are linked in this document. Stories are not just for younger children!

Cobblestone magazine: “Quakers” issue

Available from QuakerBooks of FGC:

<https://quakerbooks.org/products/quakers-cobblestone-magazine-6178>

Other Curricula for Middle School:

- Quaker Religious Education Collaborative:
 - Youth materials in the Resource Library
<https://quakerrecollaborative.org/resources/youth-religious-education>
- PYM website “Resources” section:
 - [Growing in the Light](#) (for grades 6-8, 1999)
 - [Wild Things: A Recipe for Running an MS Gathering](#) (for Middle School Friends, 1996, by Jennifer Galloway)
 - [Working with Middle Schoolers](#) (1992, by Linda Brick and Barbara Henderson)

September – Introductions

Start in September with introductions — youth with each other, adults who will support their program, and to the plans for the year. Students also are starting back to school, often a major change after summer routines, and the first weeks of school may be tiring both physically and emotionally as they reorient to schedules, classes, peer community. For middle school youth, adding Sunday morning as another time to “get up and go” might be challenging, so beginning in a way that reconnects and invites their input and engagement is important. **Getting-to-know-you activities** are a good way to start. These will allow the youth to begin to build relationships and to create community. Other ideas for kicking things off:

- Provide **journals** for each person to use throughout the year. (Quakers have been journaling since Fox!) Keep journals at the meeting to make available during worship or program times; they are not “homework” but an available spiritual practice/tool.
- Gather around questions such as, “Who are we (as Quakers)?” and “Who am I (as a spiritual person)?,” both to learn more about student knowledge and interests, and to connect the program to their sense of **identity** as Friends. Use journals and discussion!
- A year-long exploration together of **Quaker history/theology** might begin with the creation of a **list of youth-generated questions** that can be displayed or posted online in a way that the group can return to answer them “as you go.” The extent and depth of this will depend on your group, their backgrounds, and their interests.

Icebreakers and Games:	Getting to know your group:	Quaker History and Theology:	Being Quaker Today:	Faith & Play Stories:
The Big Wind Blows” https://www.trainingforchange.org/training_tools/the-big-wind-blows/	QA: Pre-assessment and/or Getting to Know You activity	QA: Quaker History Powerpoint (PPT) A video walk through 1652 Country and Early Quaker History: <i>Flat Fox and Fell</i> https://youtu.be/Kmf2VizTeml	QREC created materials to accompany YouTube videos for FWCC: https://quakerrecollaborative.org/resources/celebrate-friends Topics include: The Top 10 Reasons I Am a Quaker ” and Are You A Quaker? ”	George Fox s Big Discovery YouTube: https://youtu.be/6fbpiANee3w?si=RV-o2U5pMGbo5Tzs
Ubuntu Cards https://store.high5adventure.org/collections/high-5-products/products/ubuntu-cards	QC: Who are we and what do we believe? — peer and family interviews			
Create a scavenger hunt to find items and places of importance at your meetinghouse	Collect questions to create a bulletin board or online “board” for the year, or respond in journals	QA: Quaker Theology PPT QA: “Quaker Queries: Quaker Theology” Session 4, page 55 (page 63 in PDF)		Margaret Fell of Swarthmoor Hall YouTube: https://youtu.be/risF1XuQNE?si=JOoGdQ4l-NsthD8

October – Testimonies

While **Quaker testimonies** can be woven into all of your lessons throughout the year, it may be helpful to begin with an overview of what testimonies are and why they are so important to Quaker faith and practice. You can focus on all of them (community, equality, integrity, peace, simplicity, stewardship), or choose to spend time reflecting on particular ones that feel especially relevant or interesting to your group.

Icebreakers and Games:	Testimony Resources:	Peace Testimony-Specific:	Testimony Activities:	Faith & Play Stories:
<p>QA: Testimony group game (page 71)</p>	<p>QC: A Doer Not a Sayer Be — see assignment and reflection with Ten Commandments and Doer quote choices</p> <p>“Let Your Life Speak x3” handout in Appendices)</p>	<p>QC: Pages 37-39 have the 1660 Peace Testimony, Bible quotes, and questions for discussion</p>	<p>Create collages (individually or in pairs/small groups) that illustrate the Quaker testimonies and how they are lived out in the world.</p>	<p>Let Your Life Speak (not on YouTube)</p>
	<p>QA: Testimonies and Queries (page 61 to 64)</p>	<p>Friends Peace Teams – Power of Goodness stories https://friendspeacet eams.org/power-of-goodness/</p>	<p>Discuss the committees your meeting has, and how their work connects with the testimonies. Ask to visit with or interview members of the committee to learn more about their witness and care for the meeting and living our Quaker faith.</p>	<p>Living the Ways of the Spirit on YouTube https://youtu.be/mMqmvRI_hAM?si=KtEtimKyh5Bzldo5</p>
	<p>QA: Quakers in Action PPT (about Q organizations)</p>			

November – Individual Discernment

After spending some time talking about Quaker history, theology, and the testimonies in November is a time to begin looking inward a bit. Considering how Quakers discern the **movement of the Spirit in their lives** may be new for some youth. Topics may include the concept of the “Inner Light,” clearness, and discerning one’s calling as it relates to making choices in daily life.

Discernment Resources:	Faith & Play Stories:
“Following the Inner Light” in Cobblestone magazine	Images of God on YouTube https://youtu.be/-tq-8E4jAXc?si=bynnzHMxLG_mgLjy
QA: Quaker Discernment PPT (part 2)	Gifts on YouTube https://youtu.be/Ebk3stS-cMw?si=nj7Val3stCBu6py0
QA: “Quaker Queries: Quaker Discernment” Session 6 page 76 (page 85 in PDF)	John Woolman Visits the Lenape at Wyalusing (not on YouTube)
QC: George Fox “assignment” as discussion (page 12)	Mary Fisher Carries the Quaker Message Near and Far on YouTube: https://youtu.be/FcqhhYFdp8Y?si=5gTNvRrPY4FoWVj_r

December – Holidays and Light

Recognizing that December is a time of community and celebration for many people of different faiths and backgrounds, this month may provide the opportunity to slow down and take some time for fun and relationship building! Your group may want to focus on various **holiday celebrations** that happen during this time of year, or how the stress of the holiday season relates to the **Quaker testimony of simplicity**, or the concept of **light in the darkness** which is found in many traditions. This may also be a time to coordinate an **intergenerational activity or celebration** with others in your meeting — a traditional one, or something new!

Testimony Activities:	Faith & Play Stories:
QC: Light in other winter holidays (page 20)	The Journey to Bethlehem on YouTube https://youtu.be/U062nw8hqwk
QC: Explore Jesus as “light of the world” quotes (pages 30-31)	

January – Spiritual Practices and Worship

Begin the new calendar year with a focus on Quaker spiritual practices, including Meeting for Worship. Your group may want to reflect on what **worship** is, and why it is central to our lives as Friends. Perhaps there are **adults in your meeting who may be willing to share** their thoughts and ideas with the youth over a meal or in an interview. What other **spiritual practices** are present in your meeting community? After the conversations, you may want to provide ways for the youth to **try out these practices**.

Discernment Resources:	Faith & Play Stories:
QA: Meeting for Worship PPT (may want to pick and choose what slides to use)	Prayer and Friends Meeting for Worship on YouTube https://youtu.be/zZRutoVvtgg
QA: “Quaker Queries: Quaker MfW” Session 5 page 66 (page 74 in PDF)	Listening for God (not on YouTube)
Middle School Meeting for Worship: A How -to Guide by 6th Graders https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1537178415/friendscouncilorg/i1ckz2k8px4uc2pbcvxj/636727605339998949MSAdvicesMFW98949.pdf	
Worship Sharing — Have youth write queries to consider as a group or intergenerationally <i>Guidelines for Worship Sharing</i> (see Appendices)	

February – Famous Friends

Ask your youth about famous Quakers! Who do they know? Are they all from George Fox’s time, or do they know some contemporary Quakers as well? After learning and discussing the stories of all different kinds of Friends, you may want to encourage the youth to consider how they are similar to/different from all of these people. Where do they see themselves reflected in these Friends’ stories?

“Famous Friends” Resources/Activities:	Faith & Play Stories:
QA: Bowl Game (page 56)	The Faith & Play collection has “stories of witness” about Fox, Fell, Fisher, and Woolman. The authors recognize the need to expand these stories to include Friends of Color, and new stories about Bayard Rustin and Sarah Mapps Douglass are in development.
“Quaker Roundtable” with Famous Friends (see Appendices for directions and link to “Famous Friends” resource.	

March – Quakerism Around the Globe

Friends in our local meetings are also part of their Quarterly Meeting, the Yearly Meeting, the Friends General Conference (North America) community, AND a world-wide Family of Friends. There are approximately 400,000 Quakers worldwide, in 87 different countries. In an increasingly globalized society, we encourage you to explore how Quakerism is similar and different in terms of theology and practices around the world.

World Quakerism Resources:
QA: Let Your Life Speak PPT (art)
QC: “Diversity of Gifts” poem – page 49
QC: Fox quote – Walk cheerfully, etc. What does that mean to you?
Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) Map — Quakers in the World https://fwcc.world/resources_cpt/map-finding-quakers-around-the-world/
FWCC’s World Office website has resources related to the 2024 World Gathering, including a link to the Quaker World Songbook: https://fwcc.world/resources/ and it’s playlist on YouTube: https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLQnET8HvIED88EW8ZMafghoY75UwsJWYQ&si=L6O8X3ZepVAy_bVe
Fox 400! In 2024, we celebrated George Fox’s 400th Birthday, and FWCC created a packet of materials to use with a variety of ages: https://fwcc.world/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/George-Fox-400-Birthday-Pack.pdf
Quaker Religious Education Collaborative created collections of materials to accompany six YouTube videos for FWCC: https://quakerrecolaborative.org/resource/celebrate-friends The topics included: “Listening in Tongues” and _How Many Quakers Are There in the World?”

April – Corporate Discernment

Youth in your meeting may be unfamiliar with how Quakers make decisions as a group. Explore corporate discernment as a spiritual practice, and the Quaker-based decision-making; then invite your youth to attend and participate in a Meeting for Business, or hold a youth-led meeting for business on a topic for decision that is of interest to them.

Corporate Discernment Resources:	Faith & Play Stories:
QA: Quaker Discernment PPT (part 1)	Friends Meeting for Business on YouTube https://youtu.be/zZRutoVvtgg
<p>“Guiding Students in Quaker-based Decision Making” includes a great glossary and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some Activities for Teaching Participation (uses movement!) • An Activity for Teaching about Selection Processes in Quaker-based Decision Makin <p>https://resources.finalseite.net/images/v1552497008/friendscouncilorg/wsxe3ktmgeumlyg8saix/QDMPacket.pdf</p>	

May – Celebration!

It's time to **reflect on everything** that your group has explored, discussed, and learned throughout the year. Were their questions answered? Are they feeling excited to take their new understandings out into the world? Is there something that they would like to focus on more deeply in the future? Do they have ideas for building community and sharing ministry with your meeting and beyond?

There are a variety of ways that you can celebrate, and below are some ideas that may be helpful for your group:

- Prepare a presentation that the youth can share with your meeting about their year and what they learned/experienced.
- Write letters to George Fox and Margaret Fell about their thoughts and feelings about Quakerism today.
- Design a creative project (such as a video, mural, zine) to represent the experiences and learnings of the year.
- Look back and reflect on their journal entries.
- Consider ways to reach out to other youth in your community.
- Have a party!
- **Attend the Middle School Friends gathering at Camp Swatara!**
(Details will be available in the spring, with thanks to Caln Quarter who encourages youth from across PYM to attend their annual gathering.)

Appendices materials follow on the next pages

Let Your Life Speak

Connections between Hebrew scripture, Christian scripture and Friends testimonies:

What can guide us in knowing how to live our faith?
Why are these stories connected to elevated places?

The Ten Commandments

“Ten Best Ways”

Outline responsibilities

to:

- God
- Family
- Community

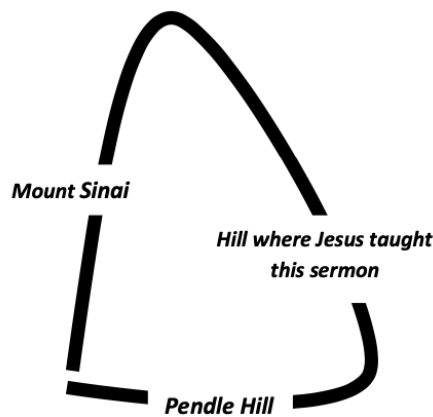
A life lived under these laws
will lead to a place in Heaven

The Sermon on the Mount

Blessed are the . . .

poor in spirit
sorrowful
gentle
pure of heart
merciful
peacemakers
persecuted

. . . they will attain the
Kingdom of Heaven



“A DOER NOT A SAYER BE . . .” - GEORGE FOX

In other words . . .

“Just do it”

Talk the talk vs walk the walk
Put your money where your mouth is
Actions speak louder than words

Let your life speak!

Worship Sharing

Worship Sharing: Group worship and discussion that focuses on a specific topic, issue or query. There is generally a leader that presents the focus for the sharing after an opening silent reflection. Each person is given the opportunity to speak or pass, and like in Meeting for Worship messages delivered are followed by a brief time of silence and reflection. Sharing may be shaped by other's messages, but is reflective of the topic, issue or query, not on what others have shared.

Guidlines: Worship Sharing is a process by which each student who wishes respond to a query within a worshipful context. Everyone who wishes to share speaks out of the silence and each person only speaks once, in order to leave space for everyone. It is "Creative Listening" for small groups of 12 or fewer.

Goals:

- Listening to God.
- Listening to Other.
- Listening to Oneself.

1. Begin and End meeting in Silence.
2. Out of the silence someone, usually a teacher, raises a query for students to think and/or speak about.
3. Absolute confidentiality – "What we say here stays here"
4. Allow space (time) between contributions – Wait at least 20 - 30 seconds before another speaker starts.
5. Use "I" messages – speak from personal experience. This is NOT a discussion.
6. No commenting directly on what others have said, though what someone says may bring to mind an experience of your own you wish to share.
7. Listen with attention.

From: Quakerism Resource Manual for Small Friends Schools, Friends Council on Education (2012)

Appendix 3: February resource

Quaker Roundtable: Leadings and Witness Across History

Youth will research the life and work of a contemporary or historical Quaker and then develop a mock “roundtable” interview program to share.

1. Read and discuss the piece “Leadings” in the book [Spirit Rising: Young Quaker Voices](#)
2. Research possible Quaker figures using the [“Famous Friends”](#) resource.¹
3. Learn about the Friend you will portray through print and web research.
4. Prepare notecards with the following information about your Quaker figure:
 - a. *Background (geographic location comes from, education, upbringing, family, vocation, etc.)*
 - b. *Ways in which this person lived the Quaker testimonies through her or his actions — how did their life “speak”?*
 - c. *What leading(s) did they follow? Did they make lasting contributions to society?*
 - d. *Words of wisdom? (quotes)*
5. Write 3 questions that it would be interesting to ask your Quaker figure; they should give you an opportunity to share the information in a-d above. You’ll be sharing these questions with other members of the group to ask you.
6. All group members share information and questions to develop an interview format or roundtable discussion that will highlight each person’s life and work for the class. This can be loosely scripted, as you will have your notes.

Here’s the BIG QUESTION:

How were these people “patterns and examples,”
who let their life speak?

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¹ Available on PYM website; with thanks to the work of Friends Media and “KidsQuake” — <http://www.pym.org/youth-programs/wp-content/uploads/sites/104/2024/08/FamousFriends2013.pdf>