Baltimore Yearly Meeting
Faith and Practice Revision Committee
Proposed Advices, Queries and Voices

Children and Young People: Advices

Rejoice in the presence of children and young people in meeting. Recognize and affirm the gifts that they bring to the life of the meeting community.

Children and young people need their peer groups. They also need whole group sharing where they are an integral part of the meeting, sharing experiences that deepen relationships. Part of sharing is learning to know of our past as Quakers. Even more important is the sharing of what we as Quakers understand as the Truth today and how it shapes our lives.

Parents are the children's first teachers; they and the meeting need to help their children understand what it means to attend meeting for worship. Children need specific expectations placed upon them.

All Friends need to be mentors to the children in their meeting.

Children and Young People: Queries

How do we provide young people with explicit guidelines in Quaker faith and practice?

How do we get to know and care for our children and young people as individuals?

What have we learned from the wisdom expressed by our children?

How do we share your deepest beliefs with children, while leaving them free to develop as the spirit of God may lead them?

Children and Young People: Voices

To watch the spirit of children, to nurture them in Gospel Love, and labour to help them against that which would mar the beauty of their minds, is a debt we owe them; and a faithful performance of our duty not only tends to their lasting benefit and our own peace, but also to render their company agreeable to us. A care hath lived in my mind, that more time might be employed by parents at home, and by tutors at school, in weightily attending to the spirit and inclinations of children, and that we may so lead, instruct and govern them, in this tender part of life, that nothing may be omitted in our power, to help them on their way to become the children of our Father who art in heaven."

John Woolman, 1758, reprinted in *Quaker Faith and Practice*, 23.81, BYM, 1995

We seek to affirm in each child at school, each member of the meeting, each person we meet in our daily lives, the person that he or she may with God's help grow to be. We are all the merest infants in God's world, struggling to stand upright and walk unaided, trying in vain to articulate our halting thoughts and feelings. We stumble and fall. We give way to self-pity and shame. God hauls us to our feet again and makes sense of our childish babble, never ceasing to believe in what we may ultimately become. Do we do the same for our children and one another? We have a responsibility to follow Pierre Ceresole's dictum: "Speak to every child as if you were addressing the utterly truthful upright individual which under your guidance he may one day become."

…When we find ourselves teaching - as we all do in our relationships within meeting - can we draw upon that respect for one another that will enable the other to feel taller and more capable?

Barbara Windle, 1988, from *Quaker Faith and Practice*, 23.78, BYM, 1995

All children are listeners, but some stop listening and remembering sooner than others. ...It makes me sad when I hear discussions about not introducing children to God until they are old enough to understand. I grew into the Lord's prayer, and I am still growing into it. All religious language, all devotional books, and particularly the Bible, provide growing room for young minds and spirits.

Elise Boulding*, Born Remembering*

I lament more than I can express that a military education and training is being introduced into our public schools. It has no business there. With such profession as we are making, a Christian profession, we have no right to be instructing children in the art of war, in the art of murdering their fellow beings.

Lucretia Mott, 1869

I want that we may all show our faith by our works, by our honesty and justice and mercy and love; I want love to begin with little children; they should be governed by love, and love only. I am glad the rod is so far banished in the family circles and the schools. Children love peace. The little child knows when it says, Mother, I love everybody. There is a Divine instinct in them which prompts to this feeling.

Lucretia Mott, 1876