

# Faith & Play™



Quaker Stories for Friends  
Trained in the Godly Play® Method

SECOND EDITION

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by the trustees of Faith & Play Stories after years of  
writing, testing, revision, and collaboration with each other  
and the Friends who were the originating authors.

For more information:  
[info@quakerfaithandplay.org](mailto:info@quakerfaithandplay.org)

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QuakerPress of FGC  
1216 Arch St, Suite 2B  
Philadelphia, PA 19107

[www.fgcquaker.org](http://www.fgcquaker.org)  
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Design and layout: David Botwinik, 2 Dorset Mews, London N3 2BN, UK

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# Bayard Rustin Speaks Truth to Power

A story about being your whole self



*Photo taken from perspective of the listeners.*

## Materials:

- Rectangular brown or dark gray felt underlay, approximately 24" x 18"
- A single flame graphic about 6" high made of successive layers of orange, yellow and red felt in graduated sizes (see template in *Faith & Play Stories* 2017 edition)
- Four wooden circles about 4" in diameter, with the following graphics: a book with a musical note, a handshake, a peace symbol, and a rainbow (see templates)
- A simple Bayard Rustin figure in Quaker gray
- Dr. King figure and several other people of color figures not in Quaker gray
- Basket of Quaker people
- A wooden bus, an image of a city bus OR a bus boycott poster (see Notes for storytellers)
- A printed photo of Rustin with a March on Washington sign
- A printed photo of the March on Washington

<b>WORDS</b>	<b>MOVEMENTS</b>
[Optional: Watch where I go to get this story so you will always know where to find it. It's not where the sacred stories are. It's not where the parables are.]	<i>Get story materials from the Quaker story area and return to your place in the circle. Put story materials beside you.</i>
This is a story of Quaker faith and witness. It is about someone who listened to the still, small voice within and discovered what God wanted him to do. His beliefs on the inside and actions on the outside became one and the same. His actions bore witness to Truth.	<i>Take out the felt underlay and smooth it out.  Hold one hand palm up for "inside," other palm up for "outside." Bring palms together for "same."</i>
	<i>Take the Bayard Rustin figure out of the basket and place it in the center top 1/4 of the underlay.</i>
When Bayard Rustin was a child, he lived with his grandparents.	<i>Place a grandmother and grandfather figure on either side of Bayard.</i>
Bayard's family, church community, and school friends when he was a child were mostly other Black people, like him.	<i>Place additional figures — including children — around Bayard and his grandparents.</i>
Bayard's grandmother, Julia, had gone to a Quaker school. She taught Bayard about the Light within every person. In that Light is love and peace, <b>and the power to be your whole self.</b>	<i>Place Light (flame) just below Bayard and grandparents, in center of underlay.</i>
There were things that <i>everyone</i> knew about Bayard. Bayard loved to learn. Bayard loved to sing.	<i>Indicate figures in his community.  Place circle with book/music symbols on the underlay, on your right side, to start a row of images below the Light. Place Bayard above this circle as you speak about him.</i>
In high school, Bayard loved learning <i>and</i> having fun with his friends. By this time, he had friends who were Black and friends who were white.	
But in this time, there was an injustice. There were places they wanted to go together that would let his white friends in, but Bayard had to stay outside because he was Black.	<i>Move Bayard to your left, above space for a new circle.</i>

Bayard and his friends knew those laws were wrong. They asked and asked to have the unfair rules changed. Sometimes, they broke the unfair rules, even though they knew they would get in trouble. They knew it was wrong to separate people.	
So, by the end of high school, there was something else that people knew about Bayard. Everyone knew that Bayard loved to learn, and that Bayard loved to sing . . .	<i>Indicate circle with book/music symbols.</i>
Now they also knew that Bayard would stand up to injustice.	<i>Place circle with handshake symbol on the underlay, to your left of the book/music circle. Bayard is above this circle as you speak about him.</i>
<b>Working for equality and justice was part of his whole self.</b>	<i>Indicate the Light.</i>
When Bayard went to college, the school he went to asked him to train to fight in a war.	<i>Move Bayard to your left, above space for a new circle.</i>
But when he listened to the Light inside him, like his grandmother had taught him, he knew he did not want to fight, and felt sure that war is always wrong.	<i>Indicate the Light.</i>
Bayard told his college that he would not learn to make war, and so they made him leave. After that, he went to a Quaker college where he learned to make peace, instead of war.	
Now everyone knew this about Bayard: that he believed in making peace and stopping war.	<i>Place circle with peace symbol on the underlay, to your left of the handshake circle. Bayard is above this circle as you speak about him.</i>
<b>Working for peace was part of his whole self.</b>	<i>Indicate the Light.</i>
Bayard had grown up. And now Bayard knew something about himself that most people <i>didn't</i> know about him.	<i>Move Bayard to your left, above space for a new circle.</i>
In that time, it was against the law to be gay. Men could not marry men, and women could not marry women.	<i>Cup your hand gently around Bayard.</i>

Bayard was gay. He knew that when <i>he</i> loved someone, that person would be another man.	<i>Place circle with rainbow symbol on the underlay, to your left of the handshake circle. Bayard is above this circle as you speak about him.</i>
But he was afraid that if people knew he was gay, his voice would not be heard and his work for justice and peace would not be seen. Bayard decided <i>not</i> to let everyone know he was gay.	<i>Turn over the rainbow circle face down.</i>
<b>For many years, Bayard struggled to share his whole self.</b>	<i>Pause for a moment.</i>
In that time, there were also laws that Black people had to sit in the back of the bus. Only white people were allowed to sit in the front.	<i>Place bus image or wooden bus in center along bottom of underlay.</i>
One day, Bayard got on a bus in Kentucky.	<i>Place Bayard next to bus.</i>
As Bayard was walking to the back of the bus, a white child sitting in the front smiled at him and reached for his red tie. The mother yanked the child's hand away.	
As the bus drove on, Bayard's heart was heavy. He waited and listened to the Light inside him. Out of the silence, he knew what to do.	
When he was ready, Bayard moved to the front of the bus and sat down.	<i>If using a bus image/wooden bus, trace the way from the back to the front with your finger.</i>
The driver told him to move back. Bayard said: "My friend, I believe that is an unjust law. If I were to sit in back, I would be supporting injustice."	
The driver stopped the bus and called the police. Bayard was arrested, taken away, and beaten.	<i>Hold up your hand in a "stop" motion, then a closed fist.</i>
It was a painful time. Even in prison, listening to the Light within gave him strength.	<i>Indicate the Light and move Bayard next to the Light.</i>

<p>Soon after that, he decided to stop trying to keep everyone from knowing his whole self. <b>And part of his whole self was being gay.</b></p>	
<p>Bayard continued to work for equality, peace, and justice.</p>	<p><i>Indicate circles now in a row below the Light circle: handshake, peace symbol.</i></p>
<p><b>But now he decided to share his whole self.</b></p>	<p><i>Turn over the rainbow circle, face up again. Move Bayard above rainbow circle. Indicate the Light, then touch rainbow again.</i></p>
	<p><i>Pause for a moment.</i></p>
<p>Bayard helped Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. with a bus boycott. Bayard taught people the power of peaceful protest. He sang to inspire them and help them remember to stay calm when police attacked them.</p>	<p><i>Move Bayard back down next to the bus. Place Dr. King figure next to Bayard. Indicate the peace symbol. Indicate the musical note on first circle.</i></p>
<p>Some people didn't like the work for equality, peace, and justice that Bayard and Dr. King were doing together. They threatened to publish stories about Bayard that only focused on him being gay.</p>	<p><i>Point to handshake and peace circles.  Point to rainbow circle.</i></p>
<p>They would turn everything Bayard did into this one thing about him.</p>	<p><i>Use your hand to cover the Light.</i></p>
<p>Because of these threats to the movement, Dr. King stopped working with Bayard.</p>	<p><i>Move Dr. King to your right, below the peace and handshake circles.</i></p>
<p>But years later, they worked together again.</p>	<p><i>Move Bayard next to King.</i></p>
<p>Everyone remembers the "I have a dream" speech Dr. King gave at the March on Washington, but Bayard was the one who made that march happen!</p>	<p><i>Place image of March on Washington on your bottom left of the underlay, across from the bus.</i></p>
<p>Bayard organized buses and bathrooms, signs and snacks for all the people who came that day.</p>	<p><i>Place image of Bayard with sign next to the March image. King and Bayard figures should be above these images.</i></p>
	<p><i>Pause to look at the whole story.</i></p>
<p>We remember Bayard Rustin as a Quaker who brought <b>his whole self</b> to the work for peace, justice, and equality — and showed others how to do the same.</p>	<p><i>Move Rustin next to the Light (on your left of this circle). Add Quaker figures among the other figures at top of the underlay, closest to you.</i></p>

	<p><i>Indicate the whole story; hold out your hands around it.</i></p> <p><i>Pause before beginning the wondering.</i></p>
<p>I wonder what part of this story you like best.</p> <p>I wonder what part is most important for you today.</p> <p>I wonder where you are in the story or what part feels like it's about you.</p> <p>I wonder when you have heard your voice speak Truth.</p> <p>I wonder when you have helped make peace.</p> <p>I wonder when you if have experienced a time or place where it was hard to be your whole self.</p> <p>I wonder how it feels when you can be your whole self.</p> <p>I wonder if you know someone like this.</p> <p>I wonder what we could take out and still have all the story we need.</p>	<p><i>Indicate Bayard Rustin.</i></p>

## Notes for storytellers:

### Acknowledgement:

Adapted by Faith & Play Stories with gratitude to Shannon Hughes, Weare Meeting, NH, for bringing forward this story and her generous collaboration in Spirit with us.

### Pronunciation of Bayard Rustin's Name:

BYE-urd RUS-tin

### Materials:

For the bus, you might use the boycott poster shared below, an image of a city bus from the 1950s, or another choice is to use the same wooden painted bus used in the *Godly Play story for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.* [This piece can be purchased from Godly Play Resources.](#)

According to the National Park Service website, the original idea for the march came from A. Philip Randolph back in the 1940's and he was still the "titular head" when the idea was revived in the 1960's. Five major civil rights leaders joined him in sponsoring it, including MLK Jr. "Randolph handed the day to day planning to his partner in the March on Washington Movement, Bayard Rustin." (<https://www.nps.gov/people/bayard-rustin.htm>)

In a 1960 letter, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King told a colleague: "We are thoroughly committed to the method of nonviolence in our struggle and we are convinced that Bayard's expertness and commitment in this area will be of inestimable value" ([Papers 5:390](#)).

### Sources

*Bayard Rustin: The Invisible Activist*, Jacqueline Houtman, Walter Naegle, Michael G. Long, QuakerPress of FGC, 2014

Quakers in the World website has an excellent bio for Rustin:

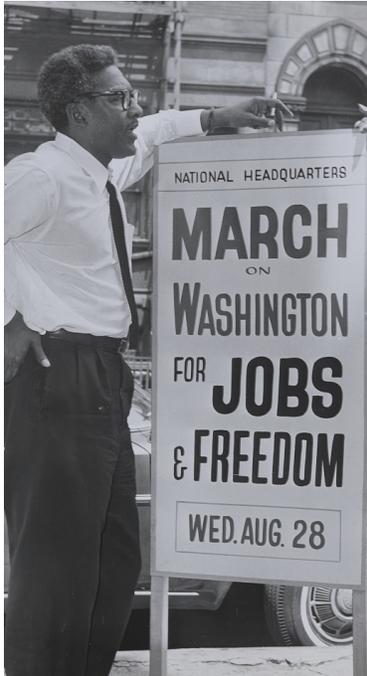
<https://www.quakersintheworld.org/quakers-in-action/160/Bayard-Rustin>

### Picture Books

*Unstoppable: How Bayard Rustin Organized the 1963 March on Washington* by Michael G. Long and illustrated by Bea Jackson. (Little Bee Books, 2023; ages 6–9, grades K–4.)

*A Song for the Unsung: Bayard Rustin, the Man Behind the 1963 March on Washington* by Carole Boston Weatherford and Rob Sanders, illustrated by Byron McCray. (Henry Holt & Company, 2022; ages 6–10, grades 1–5.)

Images are from Wikipedia Commons and the Civil Rights Digital Library.

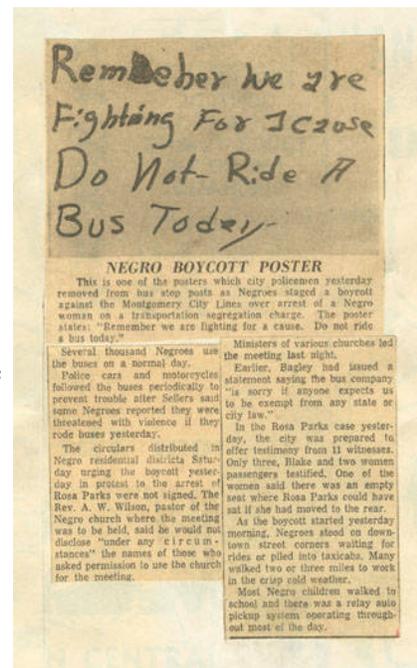


[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bayard\\_Rustin\\_NYWTS\\_3.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bayard_Rustin_NYWTS_3.jpg)

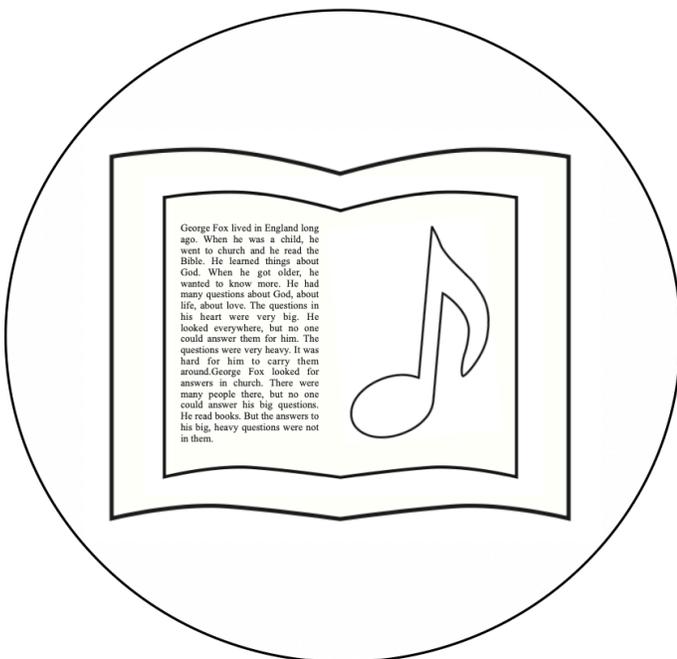
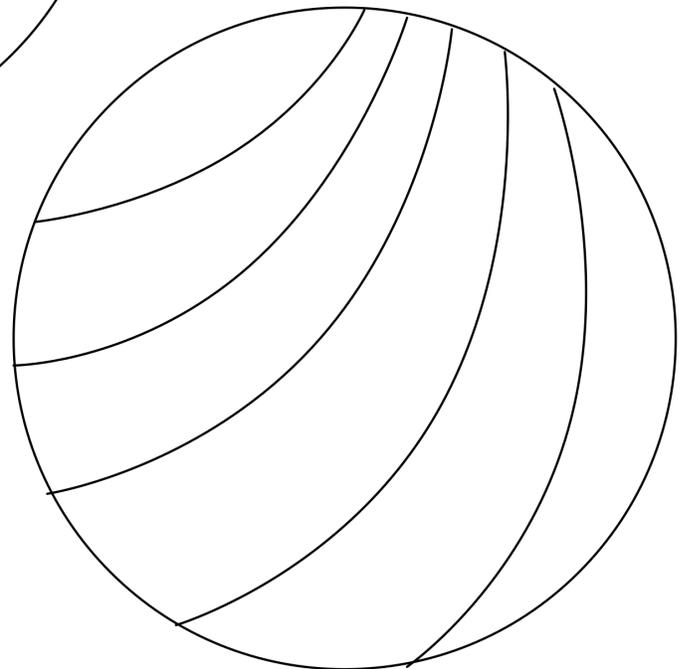


<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:IhaveadreamMarines.jpg>

Alternative to having a wooden bus or image is this news article about a poster that encouraged Black people not to ride the bus on a protest day.

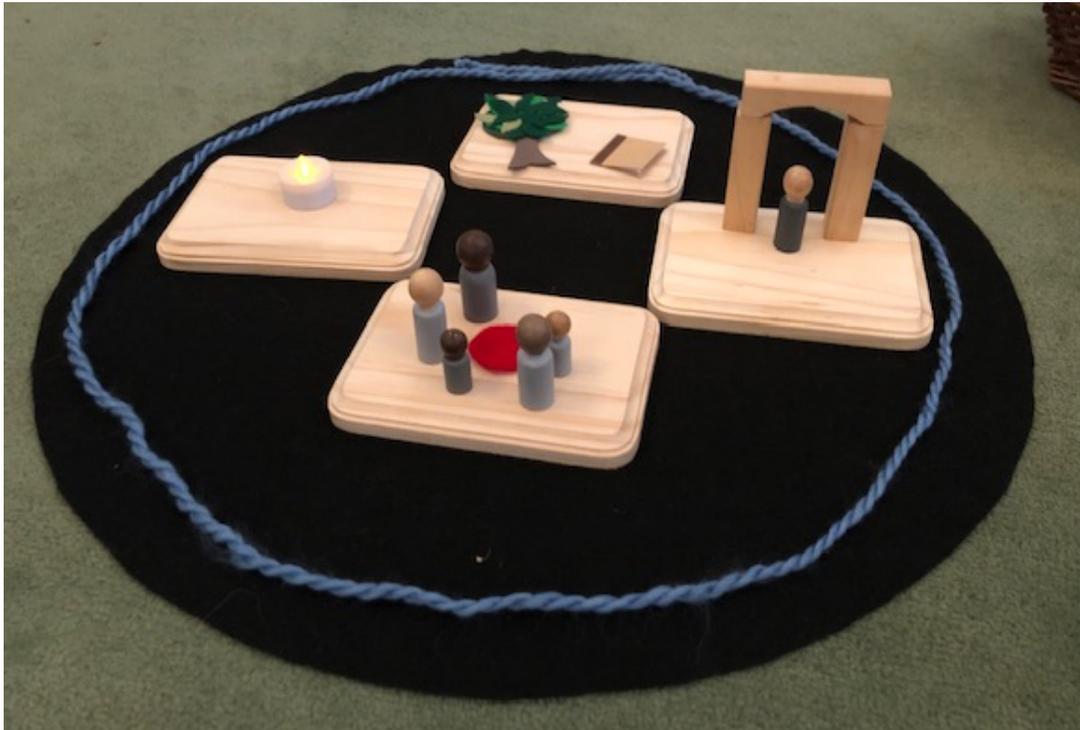


<https://digital.archives.alabama.gov/digital/collection/photo/id/176>



## Four Doors to Meeting for Worship\*

A story about experiencing meeting for worship and feeling close to God



*Photo taken from perspective of the listeners.*

### Materials:

- Round black or dark blue felt underlay, approximately 24" in diameter (the same color as your materials for "Listening for God" story)
- Wooden people figures (4-6); people should be various colors and sizes
- Four wooden plaques similar to the one used in "Prayer and Friends Meeting for Worship" story; suggested size 5"x7"
- Arch for "threshold"; suggest gluing together if you use multiple blocks
- Tea light (can be battery)
- Small red felt circle
- Small book or bowl
- Item from nature (shell, leaf)
- Blue yarn long enough to encircle the underlay

**\*See "Notes for storytellers" at end of story for acknowledgement of original source.**

<b>WORDS</b>	<b>MOVEMENTS</b>
[Optional: Watch where I go to get this story so you will always know where to find it. It's not where the sacred stories are. It's not where the parables are.]	<i>Get story materials from the Quaker story area and return to your place in the circle. Put story materials beside you.</i>
This is a Quaker story about experiencing meeting for worship and feeling close to God.	
Worship can happen at any time and in any place, not just during meeting for worship.  God is with us and in us and around us all the time.  We may feel closer to or further away from God at different times in our lives.	<i>Spread out underlay.</i>
For some, worship might feel like stepping into a living stream which has always been there. We need to be ready to step into that stream.  One way to enter the stream is to imagine going through four doors which lead into and through meeting for worship.	<i>Place blue yarn on the underlay, at the edge of the circle.</i>
The first door is the <b>Door Before</b> .	<i>Place first plaque and threshold on underlay, closest to you at the "top" of the circle.  Place person in doorway and push through to center of the wooden plaque.</i>
We enter the Door Before when we find ourselves feeling worshipful at any time during the week, day or night.	<i>Place objects (book, tree) on either side of the person.</i>
Some Friends have grace before meals or say prayers before bed. Some Friends read the Bible or have an important talk with a close friend. Some Friends take time to feel beauty and wonder in nature, art, and music. These are some worshipful ways to enter the Door Before. There are many, many more.	
Practicing going through the door before can make it easier for you to settle into meeting for worship and it can help the whole meeting, too. It helps us to get ready all week long.	<i>Pause.</i>

<p>Next comes the <b>Door Inward</b>.</p> <p>We pass through the Door Inward when we join worship.</p>	<p><i>Place second plaque on underlay, below the first but still in the top half of circle.</i></p> <p><i>Move threshold to second plaque.</i></p>
<p>We ask ourselves, “How do I get ready to be close to God?” This is called centering.</p> <p>When we center and wait, we start to feel Spirit’s presence.</p>	<p><i>Place person in doorway and push through to center of the wooden plaque.</i></p> <p><i>Pause.</i></p>
<p>Some Friends ask themselves questions or queries, some pray, or pay attention to their breath, or imagine Light in each Friend in meeting.</p> <p>Some Friends need to move their bodies or work with their hands.</p> <p>These are some of the ways that Friends enter the Door Inward and feel ready for worship.</p>	<p><i>Light tealight candle or turn on battery powered one, in front of person.</i></p>
<p>The next door is the <b>Door Within</b>.</p> <p>We have settled into meeting for worship.</p>	<p><i>Place third plaque on underlay, below the second and in top of lower half of circle.</i></p> <p><i>Move threshold to third plaque; place person in doorway and push through to the wooden plaque.</i></p>
<p>Now we begin to feel connected to the Friends gathered with us. This is different than feeling centered by yourself.</p>	<p><i>Place person in the same place they were on the second plaque; add other Friends in circle.</i></p>
<p>The boundaries of the self can become blurred and blended as we feel ourselves more and more united with fellow worshipers and with the Spirit of God.</p>	<p><i>Place red circle of felt in the middle of the circle of people.</i></p>
<p>We may feel peaceful. We may become aware of a problem or something in our life that needs our attention. Maybe we realize how we are called to let our life speak.</p>	

<p>This is the time when someone in meeting for worship may be moved to share a message with the Friends gathered. Feeling the presence of others and of God, listening within and receiving what others share: these are ways to be worshipful.</p>	<p><i>Pause.</i></p>
<p>The last door is the <b>Door Beyond</b>.</p> <p>At the close of worship, we greet one another.</p>	<p><i>Place fourth plaque below other others, closest to the bottom edge of the underlay circle.</i></p> <p><i>Indicate the Friends still in a circle on third plaque.</i></p>
<p>When we greet one another it is like a promise to God that we will go into the world with new eyes and new faithfulness.</p>	<p><i>Move threshold to final plaque; place person in doorway and push through to the center of the wooden plaque.</i></p>
<p>After meeting for worship we might ask ourselves:</p> <p>“What new understanding has this time with God and with the Friends gathered given me?”</p> <p>“How do I become the presence of God in the world - God’s eyes, ears, mouth, hands, and feet?”</p> <p>This is how we pass through the Door Beyond. Sharing the grace of our gathered worship in the world.</p>	
<p>So this is the end.</p>	<p><i>Indicate final plaque.</i></p>
<p>Here is the beginning...the middle...and the end.</p>	<p><i>Point to each plaque in order.</i></p>
<p>We take those questions and new understandings and try to live them.</p> <p>We pray throughout our week, and share with others in a way that hearts touch hearts.</p>	

<p>This brings us back to the Door Before, doesn't it? The ending is also a beginning, so we can't leave this story in a line.</p> <p>[Optional explanation: "Let's rearrange the doors into a circle to show that."]</p>	<p><i>Move four plaques into a circle as shown in photo — slide the second to the right and move the final plaque to your left.</i></p>
<p>Maybe there is no beginning and no end.</p> <p>The doors flow from one to the next like a living stream that is always moving.</p>	<p><i>Indicate a "flow" in a circle with the blue yarn around the story at edge of underlay.</i></p> <p><i>Pause before beginning the wondering.</i></p>
<p>I wonder what part of this story you like best.</p> <p>I wonder what part is most important for you today.</p> <p>I wonder where you are in the story or what part feels like it's about you.</p> <p>I wonder what we could take out and still have all the story we need.</p> <p>I wonder what else goes here for you, at the Door Before?</p> <p>I wonder what helps you to enter worship and the Door Inward?</p> <p>I wonder how it feels in the Door Within?</p> <p>I wonder how you feel in the Door Beyond?</p> <p>I wonder what would happen if the doors were left in a line?</p>	<p><i>Indicate first plaque.</i></p> <p><i>Indicate second plaque.</i></p> <p><i>Indicate third plaque.</i></p> <p><i>Indicate fourth plaque.</i></p>

## Notes for storytellers:

### Acknowledgement:

This Faith & Play story is based on the writing of William Taber in Pendle Hill Pamphlet #306, “Four Doors to Meeting for Worship.” We are grateful to Pendle Hill for permission to adapt that work for this format. Pendle Hill Pamphlet #306 is available at [www.pendlehill.org](http://www.pendlehill.org).

Thanks also to Joy Duncan and Friends at Evanston Meeting for their early development of this story.

### Ideas for sharing this story:

This story might be used as part of a religious education program for children, a program for adults, or intergenerational worship. It might be a companion story to “Prayer and Friends Meeting for Worship” in the 2017 edition of Faith & Play Stories.

### Optional cards:

The “cards” below may be cut out and shown in the story (the three smaller queries), or shared in the single card format after the story in a program, or with Friends in the benches if this story is told during worship. One caution about adding the three smaller cards in the story when telling it to children is that pre-literate listeners might feel the story is “less for them” if reading is required. Hold this concern lightly, knowing your group.

### Story materials from additional views:



*Photo taken from perspective of the storyteller.*



*Photo taken from above materials.*

What new understanding  
has this time with God  
and with the Friends  
gathered given me?

How do I become the  
presence of God in the  
world - God's eyes, ears,  
mouth, hands and feet?

How will I share the grace  
of gathered worship  
in the world?

*What new understanding has this time with God  
and with the Friends gathered given me?*

*How do I become the presence of God in the  
world - God's eyes, ears mouth, hands and feet?*

*How will I share the grace of gathered worship  
in the world?*

# Sarah Mapps Douglass and the Truth of the Back Bench

A story about making choices for yourself and for change



*Photo taken from perspective of the listeners.*

## Materials:

- Dark purple felt rectangular underlay approximately 18”x 24”
- 8 strips of brown felt to show “benches” in meetinghouse, each approximately 1” x 6-8”
- Wooden blocks to represent half-wall between front and back of the meetinghouse
- Wooden people figures: two people of color for Sarah and her mother; 3-4 people who represent white Quakers at that time
- Images for Sarah’s letter, her art, and study of anatomy (see templates; these can be mounted on wooden cards or stiff felt)
- Small wooden desk or small shell
- Small wooden bench (or another strip of brown felt)
- Image of Arch Street Meeting House exterior

<b>WORDS</b>	<b>MOVEMENTS</b>
[Optional: Watch where I go to get this story so you will always know where to find it. It's not where the sacred stories are. It's not where the parables are.]	<i>Get story materials from the Quaker story area and return to your place in the circle. Put story materials beside you.</i>
This is a story of Quaker faith and witness. It is about someone who listened to the still, small voice within and discovered what God wanted her to do. Her beliefs on the inside and her actions on the outside became one and the same. Her actions bore witness to the Truth.	<i>Smooth out underlay.  Hold one hand palm up for "inside," other palm up for "outside." Bring palms together in prayer position for "same."</i>
Sarah Mapps Douglass was a Quaker born in Philadelphia more than 200 years ago.	<i>Cradle Sarah Mapps Douglas figure in your hands with reverence and gentleness.</i>
Her family were free Black people during a time when many people of African descent were enslaved in the United States. People who are enslaved have to do everything they are told to do. They are told where to live, who they may love, and what they can be. Their freedoms are taken from them.	<i>Place the figure in the center of the underlay.  Hold hands out, around Sarah, and then bring them in to your chest when you say, "taken from them."</i>
Sarah's grandfather was enslaved by a Quaker for seven years before being freed. He became a Quaker, and a baker. His daughter Grace, who was Sarah's mother, grew up as a Quaker and ran a business of her own.	<i>Put Grace figure on underlay; in your near right-hand corner.</i>
Sarah loved to learn. She painted, and she wrote poetry.	<i>Show the reproduction of Sarah's painting around the circle to listeners, then place back in basket.</i>
From a young age Sarah attended meeting for worship with her mother. Sitting in the silence next to her mother, Sarah felt so close to God.	<i>Cup hand over Sarah.</i>
When Sarah and her mother went to Arch Street Meeting in Philadelphia to worship, they were told to sit on a bench apart from the other Friends. It was a back bench reserved for Black people.	<i>Put out image of Arch Street Meeting House in your near left-hand corner.  Put small bench in center of underlay closest to you. Stand Sarah in front of it and Grace next to it.</i>

	<p><i>Add brown felt strips for “benches” starting at the front of the underlay, working back toward the wooden figures. Take your time. Add two wooden blocks after the felt strips, on either side (see photo).</i></p>
<p>Here. You can see from the front of the meeting room. Sarah and her mother had to sit all the way back here, on a back bench.</p> <p><b>The choice was taken from them.</b></p>	<p><i>Indicate front of the underlay. Bring hand back slowly to the “back bench” to indicate the distance.</i></p>
<p>White Friends who tried to sit with Sarah and Grace in the back would be stopped and told that the bench was reserved for people of color.</p>	<p><i>Add two Quaker figures who are white people to the area between the last felt bench and the blocks.</i></p> <p><i>Put up your hand like a “stop.”</i></p> <p><i>Move the two white figures forward to sit on benches on either side.</i></p>
<p>Sarah would often sit in the silence of meeting for worship feeling hurt and angry.</p> <p>She knew that she must find ways to object to how she and her mother were treated by the community of Friends.</p>	
<p>Still, Sarah felt God calling her to keep going back to meeting, even though the white Quakers made decisions about her, without her, even though they didn’t treat her the way she wished they would.</p>	
<p><b>The choice of how to worship was taken from her.</b></p>	<p><i>Hold hands out, around the story, and then bring them in to your chest together when you say, “taken from her.”</i></p>
<p>But in the silent waiting and listening of meeting for worship, God would come so close to Sarah, and Sarah would come so close to God, that she knew what God wanted her to do and who God called her to be.</p>	<p><i>Bring your hand down to cup over Sarah, and then lift it cupped above her head.</i></p> <p><i>Move Sarah to front of underlay.</i></p>

<p>Sarah felt called to become a teacher. She opened a school for Black girls in Philadelphia. She believed that girls should learn all the subjects that boys did, like math and science.</p>	<p><i>Place desk or shell on underlay, on Sarah's right.</i></p>
<p><b>For some people, the choice of what to learn was taken from them.</b></p>	<p><i>Hold hands out, around the story, and then bring them in to your chest together when you say, "taken from them."</i></p>
<p>Sarah felt called to study anatomy at the Female Medical College of Pennsylvania. She wanted to help women in her community understand their bodies and ways to be healthy.</p>	<p><i>Place human anatomy drawing or image of the medical college on underlay, on Sarah's left.</i></p>
<p><b>For other people, choices about their bodies were taken from them.</b></p>	<p><i>Hold hands out, around the story, and then bring them in to your chest together when you say, "taken from them."</i></p>
<p>And Sarah helped to begin the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society along with her mother Grace and other women.</p> <p>It was the first anti-slavery group for women in American history. Black and white women worked together against segregation and racial prejudice.</p>	<p><i>Place a small group of female figures, 2 white and 2 people of color, together in the bottom left of underlay. You can take one from the benches, and one should be Grace.</i></p>
<p><b>Sarah made choices that she hoped would make changes.</b></p>	
<p>Wherever she went, whatever cause she was advocating for, when she went to Quaker meeting, Sarah would be pointed toward the back bench and told that it was the place for people with her skin color to sit in worship.</p>	<p><i>Move Sarah back to the back bench.</i></p>
<p>Sarah used her voice to protest. She wrote many essays and letters for newspapers.</p>	<p><i>Show her letter and place letter on underlay.</i></p>

<p>She described how Quakers said they believed in freedom for enslaved Black people, but then treated them differently in their own Quaker meetings.</p>	<p><i>Hold one hand palm up over the meeting room for “believed,” and then the other palm up over the other side for “treated.” Move hands apart, emphasizing the disconnect between them.</i></p>
<p>She would teach others that making choices for another person is not freedom.</p>	<p><i>Bring hands in to your chest together when you say, “not freedom.”</i></p>
<p>White Quakers often responded to Sarah’s message by denying that Black people were treated differently.</p>	<p><i>Put up your hand like a “stop” again when say, “denying.”</i></p>
<p>People would say that Friends of Color sat separately because that was their preference, and that there weren't many Black Quakers because few applied to be members.</p>	
<p>Sarah wrote about how her mother had been discouraged from applying for membership. Grace was warned that if she applied she would only get her feelings hurt. They didn’t want to have to tell her no.</p>	
<p>Sarah wrote about the back bench: “There I still sit, not from choice, as has been asserted, but because it is appointed for me.”</p>	<p><i>Point to the back bench again, where Sarah is standing in front of it.</i></p>
<p><b>Making choices for another person is not kindness or freedom.</b></p>	<p><i>Hold hands out, around the story, and then bring them in to your chest together when you say, “kindness or freedom.”</i></p>
<p>After a time of listening and learning, Friends in Sarah’s meeting came to see this truth.</p> <p>Sarah and other Friends of Color could choose where to sit in the meetinghouse — <b>they no longer had to sit on the back bench.</b></p>	<p><i>Move Sarah, Grace, and all wooden figures to benches in the meetinghouse. Sarah should be on the front left bench, to be visible.</i></p>

<p>Sarah continued to attend Quaker meeting for the rest of her life. This was where she felt closest to her mother’s memory, and it was where she felt closest to God.</p> <p>She often felt sad and angry when white Friends made choices for her and called it kindness. But she would not let them take away her connection to God and to her mother.</p>	<p><i>Cup your hand over Sarah.</i></p>
<p>When we listen, Spirit helps us know how to love, what to do, and who to be. But we have to be free to make our own choices to follow Spirit’s guidance.</p>	
<p>Sarah lived this truth that what we believe on the inside and how we act on the outside should be one and the same.</p>	<p><i>Hold one hand palm up over the meeting room for “on the inside,” and then the other palm up over the other side for “on the outside.” Bring hands together for “one and the same.”</i></p>
<p><b>Freedom is for all people. In it is love.</b></p>	<p><i>Indicate the whole meeting room, with a hand on either side, when you say, “for all people.”</i>  <i>Move hands together over story when you say, “in it is love.”</i></p>

I wonder what part of this story you like best.

I wonder what part of this story is most important to you right now.

I wonder where you are in the story, or what part feels like it is about you.

I wonder what part of this story we can leave out, and still have all the story we need.

I wonder when has someone thought they were being kind, and hurt your feelings?

I wonder when you have been told “no” and how that felt?

I wonder when you’ve ever been told to do something even though it felt wrong to you?

I wonder if anyone has ever made a choice for you and called it kindness.

I wonder if someone has treated you differently than they treat other people.

I wonder if you have ever felt unloved by someone who was important to you.

I wonder what it felt like to keep loving them anyway.

I wonder if you know anyone like this.

*[You do not need to use all the wondering questions each time.]*

*Indicate Sarah Mapps Douglass figure.*

## Notes for storytellers:

### Acknowledgement:

Adapted by Faith & Play Stories with gratitude to Elizabeth Freyman, Albuquerque Meeting, NM, for bringing forward this story and her generous collaboration in Spirit with us.

### Materials Note:

The student desk is optional (they are found online) and a shell can be used instead to represent the study of the natural world. Sarah kept a cabinet in her classroom with shells and minerals for her students to study.

### Biographical Note:

Sarah Mapps Douglass lived between 1806-1882.

Douglass also helped found the Female Literary Association in 1831, a group of free Black women dedicated to improving their skills and deepening their identification with enslaved Black women.

Between 1853-1877, Douglass studied anatomy, female health, and hygiene at the Female Medical College of Pennsylvania and the Ladies' Institute of Pennsylvania Medical University. She was the first Black student at the Medical College. Her studies influenced her decision to lecture and teach evening classes to Black women on issues of physiology and hygiene. "The Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania, founded in 1850 as the Female Medical College of Pennsylvania, was the first medical school in the world for women authorized to award them the M.D. It was established in Philadelphia by a group of progressive Quakers and a businessman who believed that women had a right to education and would make excellent physicians." [Link to learn more.](#)

Today, Arch Street Meeting House is the home of a worship community, Monthly Meeting of Friends of Philadelphia, and is a historic site in Philadelphia. A [virtual tour on the website](#) discusses "the back bench" and shares from a letter Sarah wrote about the discrimination. [The Friends Pantry & Community Fridge](#) is a joint project of the museum and meeting, seeking to support neighbors experiencing food insecurity.

### Sources:

Margaret Hope Bacon, [Sarah Mapps Douglass: Faithful Attender of Quaker Meeting: View from the Back Bench](#), QuakerPress (2003)

Margaret Hope Bacon Pendle Hill Lecture, "Sarah Douglass and Racial Prejudice within the Society of Friends"

*The Back Bench: A Novel* by Margaret Hope Bacon

Margaret Hope Bacon, [Learning from Sarah Douglass](#), Friends Journal (2002)

Angell, S., (2023) "Sarah Mapps Douglass and Sojourner Truth: Intersections of Religion, Race, Gender and Social Class", *Quaker Studies* 28(1), 35–59. doi: <https://doi.org/10.3828/quaker.2023.28.1.7>

Piola, Erika, "Visual Feasts: The Art of Sarah Mapps Douglass," *ArtHerstory*, March 6, 2023, <https://artherstory.net/visual-feasts-the-art-of-sarah-mapps-douglass/>

**Story materials from additional views:**



*Photo taken from above materials.*



*Photo taken from perspective of a listener.*

Inside of Arch Street Meeting House's West Room, showing the distance to the back



Images are from Wikipedia Commons and are in the public domain.



*One short year ago, how different were my feelings on the subject of slavery! It is true, the wail of the captive sometimes came to my ear in the midst of my happiness, and caused my heart to bleed for his wrongs; but, alas! The impression was as evanescent as the early cloud and morning dew. I had formed a little world of my own, and cared not to move beyond its precincts.*

*But how was the scene changed when I beheld the oppressor lurking on the border of my own peaceful home! I saw his iron hand stretched forth to seize me as his prey, and the cause of the slave became my own. I started up, and with one mighty effort threw from me the lethargy which had covered me as a mantle for years; and determined, by the help of the Almighty, to use every exertion in my power to elevate the character of my wronged and neglected race.*

*One year ago, I detested the slaveholder; now I can pity and pray for him.*

*Sarah Mapps Douglass*

*Address to the Female Literary Association, 1832*



