



Playing with God: An Exciting Experience

By June-Etta Chenard



Sam Friesen-Beardsell making God cards at CYM
(Photo by Bruce Dienes)

When it was time for my workshop with the 10-to-12-year-old CYM Friends, I no longer felt led to use my planned activity. Going to meet them, I had no clear leading beyond the theme of *playing with God*.

The first child to arrive had some Pokémon cards. Immediately an idea, which became an exciting activity for all of us, was given to me.

As I quickly cut out what would become the backs and the fronts of cards, I invited the children to offer words that they felt related to God. Starting with energy, we went to life force, God, and lots of other stimulating words. Some of these words, such as *exciting*, I had not previously considered as a description of God.

I first asked them to make cards that they felt showed *that of God*. While they made cards on many things from bible verses to gymnastics to colours, I offered a brief description of Quakers' *sense of the meeting* and invited them to use this to decide the design for the back of everyone's card. They enthusiastically worked at their *God cards*, as they had now started calling them, while they threw out ideas. This was done in a harmonious, respectful, though energetic manner. They soon came to a sense of the meeting: the card backs would have angel wings, a halo above the wings, and the letter G (for God) in the middle.

One of the girls drew angel wings that many children appreciated and she agreed to draw angel wings on

the back of anyone's card, if they wished — and most did.

Next, I had an idea to maintain their high level of interest. I told them that, should they wish, they could take a challenge to make a theme card of my choosing. The only obligation was that, once I told them their topic, they were obliged to make a card on that topic. They were free, however, not to ask for a challenge topic.

As usual for this age, there were some boy-girl tensions so to each boy who asked for a challenge topic, I whispered in their ear that they were to make a card about 'that of God in the power of girls,' and vice-versa for the girls. They quickly agreed to do this. To any who made less than whole-hearted attempts at these cards, I asked them to show me their challenge card along with the cards they had done before, and then asked whether they felt they had given the same care and attention to making that card. Usually, they quickly decided to put more work into the challenge theme.

Suddenly I knew what we could do next. I said that anyone who wished could have a much harder challenge. Again, the only rule was that if I told them the challenge, they were then to complete that card.

As people were ready for the challenge topic, I took them just outside the door and I asked them to quickly

tell me three things they really liked. As soon as they had, I asked them to tell me three things they really didn't like. I then asked them to make a card about that of God in one of the things they didn't like. They did cards on onions, dirty diapers, chin-ups, being bored on long car rides, fungus, and even Barbie.

In the final round of card-making, I invited them to ask for a 'reward card' theme, which was to make a card on one, two, or all three of the things they had said they most liked.

These young people were highly enthusiastic, and worked rapidly and with great concentration, and many continued after our session ended. In fact, I later found two of the boys selling their cards to 'raise money for starving people in Africa' and explaining the significance of their cards to those interested. They made many more cards, and earned \$21.65, which they donated to Canadian Friends Service Committee.

After this exhilarating adventure, I certainly agree that 'exciting' is a word I can use to describe playing with God. ♥

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