

QUAKERS AND SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the nature of spiritual direction within Quakerism as found in the early years and again within in a group of modern-day Quakers.

Spiritual nurture among early Quakers was literary research and in particular examined the writings of Margaret Fell and Isaac Penington. Modern-day Quaker spiritual nurture was researched using interviews. Both periods were analysed using Margaret Guenther's typology of spiritual nurture.

This research finds early Quakers mostly giving spiritual nurture via correspondence, however, evidence is also found of personal spiritual nurture and oversight within the seventeenth century community

Modern Quakers are found to be mindful of their spiritual nurture and development accessing these from a wide variety of sources within and without the Quaker community.

There is found to be a distinct style of Quaker spiritual direction described as 'self-direction' and 'dyadic' in nature and the importance of group work is highlighted in the spiritual well-being of a Quaker community.

The questions raised by this research include the possible exploration of sacro-egoism and sacro-theism within Quaker community and the amount of spiritual support for individual people within the Quaker community both for the nurtured and nurturers.

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LIST OF CONTENTS

	PAGE NO.
CHAPTER 1 : Introduction	7
CHAPTER 2: Literature Review	9
CHAPTER 3: Research Methodology	14
CHAPTER 4: Definitions of Spiritual Direction	24
CHAPTER 5: Spiritual Direction among Early Quakers	30
CHAPTER 6: Interviews of modern-day Quakers and Findings	42
CHAPTER 7: Conclusion	86
Appendix A: Interview questions	93
Appendix B: Information sheet given to prospective volunteer interviewees	95
Appendix C: Consent form	97
Appendix D: Article written and included in the Area Meeting newsletter introducing the project	98
Appendix E: Extracts from two interview transcripts	100
Appendix F: Full list of spiritual contact categories	108
References	109

LIST OF FIGURES

	PAGE NO.
Fig. 6.1: Overview of spiritual contacts of interviewees in the main categories	44
Fig. 6.2: Spiritual contacts with individuals (average)	45
Fig. 6.3: Spiritual contacts via groups (average)	60
Fig. 6.4: Spiritual contacts via community (average)	70
Fig. 6.5: Spiritual contacts via media (average)	77

LIST OF TABLES

	PAGE NO.
Table 4.1: Guenther's aspects of spiritual direction	29
Table 5.1: Guenther's aspects of spiritual direction, found or not found, among early Quakers	41
Table 6.1: Category and spiritual nurture contacts of modern Quakers : data analysis	43
Table 6.2: Guenther's aspects of spiritual direction, found or not found, among modern Quakers	85

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation explores Spiritual Direction among Quakers in both the seventeenth and twenty-first centuries. Grundy claims that early Quakers did not offer each other spiritual direction (2007). I found evidence to the contrary whereby early Quakers gave spiritual direction both via correspondence and personal contact. The analysis of twenty-first Quakers found them to be self-directed and nomadic¹ in their search for spiritual nourishment and to be both spiritually nurtured and nurturers.

Indeed, through this study I have come to recognise the deep tradition of spiritual guidance within the Quaker way of being. Introducing a lecture entitled ‘Spiritual Guidance in Quaker Experience’ in 1909, W.C. Braithwaite began:

The contribution to this discussion by The Society of Friends [Quakers] is the more valuable because it has been made, not by thinkers along the lines of theology and psychology, but by disciples along the lines of experience. The Society of Friends has been a ‘Holy Experiment’ in spiritual guidance and has supplied abundant verification of its reality, and rich material for judging of the conditions which are necessary for its exercise. (1909)

The seed of my exploration of spiritual direction among Quakers was sown whilst studying spiritual direction and finding that I was only the second Quaker to take the course. This left me wondering why given the fact that there is no ecclesiastical establishment within the Society as explained in *Quaker Faith and Practice*²:

¹ This term is used by John Knox (2009:255) to describe people in the modern world who shop around for their religious nourishment.

² *Quaker Faith and Practice* : this book of faith and practice constitutes the Christian discipline of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain. It consists for the most part of advice and counsel, the encouragement of self-question, of hearing each other in humility and love. (1994:13)

When early Friends affirmed the priesthood of all believers, it was seen as an abolition of the clergy; in fact it is an abolition of the laity. All members are part of the clergy and have the clergy's responsibility for the maintenance of the Meeting as a community. This means helping to contribute, in whatever ways are most suitable, to the maintenance of an atmosphere in which spiritual growth and exploration are possible for all. (1994:11.01).

In other words, individual Quakers are their own priests and their responsibilities therefore include spiritual nurture within their Meeting's community.

Later, I came across writings of Margaret Fell and Isaac Penington and was struck by the spiritual direction these contained. This raised the question – 'if the early Friends held the role of spiritual directors, where are the spiritual directors of today?'

The dissertation starts with a literature review, then looks at definitions of spiritual direction within the Western Christian tradition, then analyses the writings of early Friends and interviews conducted amongst present-day Friends. The dissertation concludes that early and modern Quaker spiritual direction is best described as self-directed, mutual spiritual direction as opposed to the more traditional Christian style of spiritual direction of a one-to-one relationship between one director to one directee.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Relevant literature falls into three categories:- that concerned with practice; historical studies and present-day studies. These are considered in turn.

2.1. Practice

There are various books about the practice of spiritual direction. *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* (Barry & Connelly 1982) and *Soul Friend* (Leech 2001) are especially thorough. *Women at the Well* (Fischer 1986) looks at women and spiritual direction and takes a feminist perspective.

Margaret Guenther's *Holy Listening* (1992) explains spiritual direction as having three main components- hospitality, teaching and midwifery. I use Guenther's definitions throughout this work when exploring the types and qualities of spiritual nurture as she offers a rare analytical perspective to the study of spiritual direction. I outline her definition and its elements in Chapter 4 below.

Ryan (2004) looks at the importance of motivation and method of prayer suited to the individual before going on to further spiritual development. Andrews (2003) asserts the value of talking about oneself to another and emphasises the professionalism necessary within both psychoanalysis and spiritual direction.

Anam Cara (O'Donohue 1999) also serves as a practitioner guide around soul friendship, as does Sellner when looking at the value of such relationships describing them as a container or cell '...in which we can face the truth of our lives without fear'. (1998:417) Sellner offers the idea that soul friendship is where counselling and therapy developed from. (1998:417)

Patricia Loring looks at spiritual practices among Quakers (1997, 1999). These books are a manual in learning to listen - to God and to each other. Volume one includes a clear explanation of the difference between spiritual friendship and spiritual guidance - friendship being a mutual relationship between peers, and direction having one person as the designated listener in the relationship. She also clarifies as follows:

In the Protestant Reformation, a great suspicion grew up that such people [directors] would become authoritarian and usurp the place of the Spirit of God. In fact, there have been people doing spiritual direction who became "Directors", laying down rules and mapping courses for peoples' lives. But in the contemplative strand of the Christian tradition of direction, it was always clear that real Direction or Guidance came from the Inward Christ. (1997:181)

Although there is little else written on the present-day practice of spiritual direction within Quakers, there is some historical analysis of Quaker spiritual direction.

2.2. Historical

Martha Paxson Grundy looks at how early Friends transmitted their new paradigm to seekers and attenders and explains that early Friends decided if people were Quakers by how they lived. (2007:152) She writes '...references to indoctrination, or what might be called religious education or spiritual direction, are sparse or even non-existent in seventeenth-century Quaker journals. On the other hand, references to spiritual friendships, what we

might understand as mentoring, and nurture abound' (2007:153). She also reports that when support and nurture were not available in human form they '...could gain sustenance from inner light' (2007:156). She also finds in old journals and stories mention of ministers speaking the exact words for troubled individuals. Grundy finds the practice of deliberate withholding of human nurture and states the purpose of this '...was to bring people into obedience to Christ Within...' (2007:157) and states that early Friends tried to develop structures that were loose enough '...for the winds of the Spirit to blow through, but tight enough to provide support'. (2007:159) – a good description perhaps for modern day spiritual direction! She goes on to highlight the importance placed on discernment which was seen as a critical tool among early Friends for their corporate life as well as their personal life decisions. Grundy concludes that as time went by, Friends became '...institutionalized and structures hardened and the outward behaviours somehow became detached from an inward spiritual transformation'. (2007:162)

Barbara Worden points out that 'Sources of real life spiritual direction among Friends depended heavily on letters, both personal letters and the uniquely Quaker institution of the Epistle' (2010:1) as well as how early Quakers relied on their personal relationship with God first demonstrated by George Fox³.

2.3. Present day studies

Although not researching spiritual direction, the Kendal Project explores contemporary religion⁴ and spirituality⁵ in Kendal (Heelas and Woodhead : 2005) and explores the possible

³ 'I directed them to the Light of Christ, the heavenly man, and to the Spirit of God in their own hearts, that they might come to be acquainted with God and Christ, receive Him for their teacher, and know His kingdom set up in them'. From Fox's *Journal* as quoted in Worden's article (2010:1)

⁴ Definition of 'religion' as found in *The Spiritual Revolution* : 'used to express a commitment to a higher truth which is "out there" lying beyond what this world has to offer and exclusively related to specific externals (scriptures, dogmas, rituals and so on)' (Heelas and Woodhead 2005 : 6)

turn of individuals from a life-as (religious) (2005:5) to a more subjective-life (spiritual) (2005:3). This distinction is described by Knox as sacro-clericalism (2008:168) when power and authority is given to the ecclesiastical hierarchy and sacro-egoism (2008:168) when the self or ego is the highest sacred authority. I found these theorisations useful in framing my conclusions.

Kitkatt analyses women and spiritual direction, looking at the use of the words for the relationship, what women expect from and have gained from such relationships together with the important requirements of a spiritual director (2010). This work emphasises the importance her interviewees put on boundaries around the spiritual director relationship as well as the importance of support and training for the directors themselves.

I found relevant Quaker critique in three works. In response to a concern by Gay Pilgrim around the non-availability of spiritual direction within Quakers (2004), Barbara Worden studied underlying themes or assumptions of Quaker spiritual practice and spiritual direction (2010). She describes Quaker spiritual direction as ‘relational’ rather than authoritative or instructive and illustrates this with the story of William Penn and the sword⁶ so revered by Quakers worldwide. She names direction to be found within Quaker groups especially the ‘gathered Meeting’⁷ for Worship and in ‘Clearness Committees’⁸ (2010:5). Worden reminds

⁵ Definition of ‘spirituality’ as found in *The Spiritual Revolution* : used to express commitment to a deep truth that is to be found within what belongs to this world’. (Heelas and Woodhead 2005 : 6)

⁶ A young man had recently become a Quaker, but continued to wear a sword for military exercise required by English universities at the time. His conscience was beginning to be disturbed about wearing the sword since it violated Quaker principles of non-violence. When he asked Fox whether he should continue to wear it or not, the Quaker leader replied “I advise thee to wear it as long as thou canst”. Not long afterwards, Fox and Penn met again and the young man was no longer wearing his sword. When Fox asked, “William where is thy sword?” Penn replied, “I have taken thy advice; I wore it as long as I could”. (Worden 2010 p. 2-3)

⁷ A ‘gathered Meeting’ is a Meeting for Worship where ‘..the Real Presence of God’ is felt. (QF&P 2.40)

⁸ Better known in Britain as Meetings for Clearness. This refers to when a chosen group of Friends meet in an atmosphere of worship to look at life situations, testing situations or specific issues needing a decision or action. (QF&P 10.:21).

the reader that the Quaker decision making procedure is not about consensus but about being corporately led by the Spirit of God.

Cilla Lynch, like Worden, points out the corporate nature of Quaker spiritual experience (2007). Although her work looks at the relationship between Ignatian and Quaker spiritualities, she points out that ‘Friends tend not to talk much about their individual spiritual practice..... When Friends refer to their Quaker spirituality, however, they are thinking of it primarily as a corporate experience....’ (28). She further writes ‘Friends may assert that there is that of God in everyone and in all things, but may not always know how to find Her/Him there’ (51). ‘The distinctive gift of Ignatian spirituality, I [Lynch] concluded, is its spiritual guidance, and perhaps that of Quakerism is its silence’ (66).

In 2007 Ginny Wall investigated spiritual friendship amongst Quakers in an informal research project based on seventy-nine completed questionnaires (personal communication). The definition she gives to spiritual friendship is as follows: ‘spiritual friendship means a relationship which includes a substantial element of spiritual support, sharing of faith journeys and, possibly, advice and guidance’. Her research found 40 per cent of the people had experience of spiritual friendship and 63 per cent agreeing such a relationship would be helpful with a further 9 per cent thinking such a relationship ‘maybe’ of benefit. Her research shows an above average interest in spiritual friendship and the experience of being listened to and recognised these were very important to participants. Wall concludes there is considerable interest among Quakers for a system for offering and finding spiritual friendship together with a need for a course to help develop associative skills.

However, no previous qualitative research project has attempted to consider the nature of spiritual direction amongst British Quakers today.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study was to identify what spiritual direction relationships exist within British Quakerism today and where a group of modern Quakers found their spiritual nurture and to explore any similarities of practices with those found among early founding Quakers. The elements of the research are fourfold as follows:

- (a) A brief study to define spiritual direction.
- (b) An exploration for spiritual direction in early days of Quakerism in the mid-seventeenth century.
- (c) A search for evidence of spiritual direction relationships within a twenty-first century Quaker community using interviews.
- (d) Discussion of the overall findings.

3.1. Overview

My experience of Quakers is that they rarely declare themselves as spiritual directors, although some do exist; nor do Quakers frequently talk about ‘spiritual direction’. Yet the support and spiritual nurture spiritual direction can offer is invaluable to individuals especially at times of doubt and change, and at those times often identified as ‘dark nights of the soul’ (Leech 2001:58). Leech, on the subject of spiritual director as healer, writes:

The spiritual guide [director] stands in a close relationship to the human psyche. In the tradition the guide plays a central role in helping individuals to move from one phase to another to enable them to understand new experiences, and to adjust to them. Spiritual directors and gurus have always been listeners, but the language to which

they listen is the “forgotten language” of myths and dreams and symbols, the language of fundamental human experience. (2001:129)

He also explains ‘The apostles too were sent to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal (2001:87) and quotes from the Constitutional papers of the Association for Pastoral Care and Counselling established in 1971 which defines spiritual direction as ‘The ministry [the calling] of the cure of souls, or pastoral care and responsibility, consists of helping acts done by representative religious persons, directed towards the healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling of troubled persons whose troubles arise in the context of ultimate means and concerns.’ (2001:93) The spiritual director is described by Leech as a healer (2001:129) and works within the pastoral care work of the established churches.

This study looked where and among whom the ‘ministry of the cure of souls’ is found within British Quakerism, historically and currently.

3.2 Research methods

Definitions of Christian spiritual direction were explored using secondary material.

Spiritual direction among early Quakers was researched through analysis of primary material dating from the seventeenth century studying a variety of original letters and journals written by founder members of the Religious Society of Friends.

The search for evidence of spiritual direction relationships within a modern Quaker community was done by research interviews and analysis.

3.3. Why interviews?

I considered the various ways of gathering information from current members of the Quakers - questionnaires, telephone interviews and group interviews. As I had trained and practiced as a spiritual director I realised that talking about spiritual issues would be a very personal and often emotional exercise. I therefore decided upon one-to-one interviews, ruling out the other options as not offering the optimum space for disclosure of spiritual matters. This decision was confirmed by Wisker who explains that interviews are often chosen where the need is for 'information based on emotions, feelings, experiences' (2008:192).

I explored the various types of interviews - structured, semi-structured, open-ended and unstructured (Wisker 2008:194). As stated above, talking about spiritual issues is deeply personal, delicate and often obscure and a sensitive subject. I therefore chose to use a semi-structured/in-depth interview technique as this would give me both flexibility to explore links between what interviewees said and meant, what is being said behind the words (Bryman 2001:313-315) in order to gain insight into the inner world of the interviewees where personal and spiritual issues reside. As part of the questioning was likely to concern past events, I decided upon using oral history style interviewing, confirmed by Arksey and Knight who write 'semi-structured interviews encourages the informants to depict the past in their own words, following their own sense of what was important' (1999:82)

3.4. The Interviews

Semi-structured interviews require 'a set of questions to be asked and space for some divergence, with the interviewer returning to the structured interview questions' (Wisker 2008:195). Writing about qualitative interviews Rubin and Rubin explain: '...you should

never pose your research problem directly to your interviewees. Instead, translate it into questions that are easier for interviewees to answer from their own experience'. (2005:157)

My 'research problem' was - Where do a community of Quakers find spiritual nurture? and I decided to approach this enquiry by focusing on participants' spiritual journey and those who had assisted them. I also asked who they went to at times of any spiritual crises and asked if they themselves had ever given spiritual nurture in order to see if some people may be more nurturer than nurtured. The key question decided upon was "Tell me about your spiritual journey particularly in respect of the kinds of assistance you have found on the way". Probes linked to this key question were chosen because '...they help manage the conversation by regulating the length of answers and degree of details, clarifying unclear sentences or phrases, filling in missing steps, and keeping the conversation on topic' (Rubin & Rubin 2005:164). A full list of the questions used together with their probes are listed in Appendix A. The question 'If you had a spiritual crises now who would you turn to?' I disregarded during the analysis process as it was an imagined scenario, whereas the rest of the questions dealt with reality.

3.4.1 Preparing for the interviews

I designed an information sheet (Appendix B) to be handed out to interested persons and interviewees plus a consent form (Appendix C) based on a UK Data Archive exemplar. A voice-recorder was purchased as I decided to record all interviews with a view to transcribing them to assist at the analysis stage.

Ethical safeguards were presented to and agreed by the University of Birmingham Ethics Committee.

3.4.2 The Trial

Two trial interviews were carried out using, for practical ease of access reasons, local Quakers. I learnt:

- i) To use 'soft' questions to begin with, questions that were easy and get the interviewee used to talking about themselves.
- ii) That one hour interviews, which I had hoped for, did not necessarily give enough time, so it was realised that between one and two hours should be allowed for.
- iii) That I showed a tendency to desire for the interviewee to have received spiritual support of some kind. This especially showed itself in the second trial interview when I tried to interpret spiritual nurture into encounters where in actuality there had been little or none experienced.

3.4.3 Preparation for the Interviews

With the trials completed and the questions finalised I began my search for interviewees. I decided, for ethical reasons discussed below, to approach my old Quaker Area Meeting⁹ to request volunteers.

I wrote to the Clerk¹⁰ of the largest Meeting within the Area Meeting. It was decided an article about the research would go into the November Area Meeting Newsletter (Appendix D) and that I present my research in person at a Local Meeting¹¹ on Sunday 23rd October 2011.

⁹ An Area Meeting in Britain, in the past known as a Monthly Meeting, is a collection of Local Meetings, the function of which is to have responsibility for property, membership and various other administrative duties (Dandelion 2007, p. 188)

¹⁰ The Clerk presides over the Business Meetings and serves as a sort of combined chairperson and secretary to a Quaker Meeting (Gillman 1988, p. 67)

The response from this Meeting was better than I had hoped. In the end eight Quakers from this Meeting and three from other Meetings within the Area Meeting were interviewed.

Eleven volunteered and I decided to interview them all.

3.4.4 Interviewing

The interviews were carried out between 23rd October 2011 and 9th December 2011.

The demographic breakdown was as follows:

Female 8

Male 3

Members ¹² of the Society of Friends female	6
Members of the Society of Friends male	3
Attendees ¹³ female	2
Attendees male	0

Of the nine Members, their length of time in Membership ranged from fifty years to three years. Both Attendees had been attending Quaker Meetings for over seven years.

Interviewees were self-selecting and thus represented a 'convenience sample' (Bryman, 2001:97). The age range of the interviewees was between forty-six and eighty years old. One interviewee was in their forties, four were in their fifties, four in their sixties and two over

¹¹ A Local Meeting [known in the past as a Preparative Meeting] is the collective noun for a group of Quakers who meet together usually in one place, a Meeting House. (Gillman 1988:25)

¹² Membership is a formal process anybody aged sixteen or over may apply for. The process of membership is set out in *Quaker Faith and Practice* (1994 11.06 : 11.07).

¹³ An Attender is one who, not being a member, frequently attends a specific Meeting for Worship *Quaker Faith and Practice* (1994 11.45).

seventy. This loosely reflects the ages of Members and Attenders to be found in Local Quaker Meetings (Cary, Dandelion, Rutherford 2009: 241)

Interviews were carried out in a safe environment where minimal interruptions were possible. Each interview was recorded on a voice recorder. The length of interviews varied from just less than one hour to one and a half hours in duration.

3.5. Ethical issues

‘Ethical guidelines insist that researchers should not do physical or psychological harm...’ writes Wisker (2008:87). Clearly interviewing around the subject of a person’s spiritual and inner life requires delving into sensitive parts of a person’s life.

Section 13 of the University of Birmingham ethics form requires research to be anonymous and requires ways of ensuring the anonymity of interviewees as a protection. For this reason it was decided the research be carried out beyond the researcher’s home ground. For further anonymity, all interviewees were asked to choose a name which would be used throughout the interviewing, transcription and analysis processes. Once the tapes were transcribed they were destroyed and attention was given to there being no identifying evidence on the transcripts.

3.6. Insider/outsider

The issue of insider/outsider was of concern throughout the interviewing process. As McCutcheon explains:

In a nutshell the problem is whether, and to what extent someone can study, understand, or explain the beliefs, words, or actions of another....Is the person we study, often terms simply as ‘the other’ an open book, an enigma, or simply a neutral screen onto which the observer projects his or her own desires and fears? (1999:2).

I envisaged difficulty with my 'insider' status. I can be seen as a double insider - I am both a spiritual director and a Quaker. As a spiritual director I can be seen as having investment in other people needing someone to talk to about their own spirituality as I do. I am also a Quaker, and therefore potentially have an investment in Quakers being seen as spiritual nurturers and spiritual nurtured. I was clear I would need to take heed of McCutcheon's advice to researchers '....to distinguish between their scholarly and their personal voices'. (1999:290) In other words, I would need to remain objective throughout. This problem, as mentioned above, had already showed itself during one of my trial interviews.

To assist with my objectivity I imagined myself, during the interviews, standing back and being dispassionate and aimed for 'objectivity': 'The ability to achieve a certain degree of distance from the research materials and to represent them fairly; the ability to listen to the words of respondents and to give them a voice independent of that of the researcher.' (Strauss and Corbin 1998:35)

3.7. The Analysis

I transcribed all eleven interviews. Two extracts from interviews can be found in Appendix E.

The analysis method used was rooted in the processes of 'grounded theory' (Strauss and Corbin 1998:12) and the development of 'typologies' (Berg 2001:166). Grounded theory is explained by Wisker as follows:

Rather than starting from theory and developing a research idea and question, the researcher starts instead from his or her own or others' experience and grows theory from that experience in action.... Grounded theory, however, is really used in practice to ground the theory (small scale rather than large-scale theories) in experience, observation and practice, probably in small samples. The researcher using grounded theory begins with a fresh perspective and some insights, but also a willingness to develop and change his or her view. (2008:213/4)

Grounded theory was chosen as I did not begin the project with a preconceived theory in mind and this suited my research approach (Strauss and Corbin 1998:12).

Typologies analysis, as described by Berg, builds the analysis by looking for typologies or commonalities thereby discrete groupings of commonalities of experience and common concepts voiced by the interviewees are looked for. As Berg explains:

....First assess the collected material and then seek out mutually exclusive categories. Second, make sure all elements being classified have been accounted for. Third, examine the categories and their contents, and make theoretically meaningful appraisals... Whilst typologies may seem like over simplification of social life, this is actually their beauty. They permit the researcher to present data in an organised and simple fashion, allowing the reader to better understand the explanations offered as interpretations and analysis of the typology scheme. A major goal of typologies, then, is to provide additional understanding of the material collected during the course of the research. (2001:166)

The words of Rubin and Rubin reflected my experience: ‘Sometimes the interviewees do not actually name the idea; they just describe its characteristics, and the researcher has to provide the label for the concept. Frequently used symbols and stories are often indicative of important underlying concepts.’ (2005:56). I struggled at times with the meaning behind the words and interpreted to the best of my ability.

I decided to categorise by looking at the actual contact points of a spiritual nurture experience named by each interviewee. The first analysis divided contacts into groupings of Quaker and non-Quaker and female and male interviewees. The primary contact categories which emerged were : people, groups, community and media. The second analysis merged the Quaker and non-Quaker contacts only and stayed with the primary contact category headings which in turn were divided into secondary categories and in some cases further sub-

categories. The final categories are set out in Appendix F. As the ratio of female to men was uneven I then averaged the contacts by gender for analysis purposes (see Fig. 6.1)

3.8 Chapter Summary

The sections defining spiritual direction and exploring early Quaker spiritual direction were literature researches. The exploration of spiritual nurture among modern Quakers was accomplished via interviews with eleven self-selecting Quakers from one Area Meeting using qualitative, semi-structured interviews. For analysis I used grounded theory to gather the information for analysis and typologies to organise the data.

CHAPTER 4

DEFINITIONS OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

This chapter briefly explores what happens within the spiritual direction relationship and its dimensions¹⁴.

4.1. What happens in the spiritual direction relationship?

As mentioned above, Leech describes the spiritual director as – ‘a healer’. He explains:

The spiritual guide stands in a close relationship to the human psyche. In the tradition, the guide plays a central role in helping individuals to move from one phase of life to another to enable them to understand new experiences, and to adjust to them. Spiritual directors and gurus have always been listeners, but the language to which they listen is the ‘forgotten language’ of myths and dreams and symbols, the language of fundamental human experience. (2001:129)

Loring describes the ‘The gift of the spiritual director’ as ‘... that of the listener/prayer who takes responsibility for keeping the environment one of attentiveness to the Holy Spirit, to the promptings of Love and Truth in the heart...’ and goes on to list the director’s responsibilities as ‘...keeping a directee focused on God...asking evocative questions that would be clarifying’ as well as ‘... having responsibility for mirroring back...’ and ‘...naming the directee’s personal intimations and experiences in terms of their particular tradition...’ (1997:181).

¹⁴ A brief exploration of the historical roots of Christian spiritual direction and its development within two traditions in Britain can be found in Appendix A.

Loring also clarifies the difference between spiritual friendship and spiritual guidance or direction as follows:

...a spiritual friendship is mutual, between peers who have equal time to listen and to be heard. In spiritual guidance or direction, one person is the designated listener in the partnership, usually sought out because they are perceived as more spiritually experienced or more openly listening or with a particular charismatic or spiritual gift for this kind of relationship. (1997:181)

Broaching the subject of suspicion around the description 'spiritual direction' Loring explains:

In the Protestant Reformation, a great suspicion grew up that such people would become authoritarian and usurp the place of the Spirit of God. In fact, there have been people doing spiritual direction who became 'Directors' laying down the rules and mapping courses for peoples' lives. But in the contemplative strand of the Christian tradition of direction, it was always clear that real Direction or Guidance came from the Inward Christ. Among Friends [Quakers], that clear sense of the origin of true guidance in the Spirit of God made spiritual guidance consistent with listening together, as well as privately, for the promptings of the Holy Spirit. (1997:181)

4.2. Dimensions of spiritual direction

For the purpose of this research I use the defining aspects developed by Margaret Guenther – hospitality, teaching and midwifery (1992). At any one time a nurturer will be offering one or more of these aspects. I condense her lengthy and detailed explanations of these roles below:

Guenther's definition of hospitality :

Guenther holds that the spiritual nurturer offers hospitality and focuses their attentions on the person seeking nurture, in her words 'The host's needs are put aside, as everything is focused on the comfort and refreshment of the guest..' She continues '...At its simplest hospitality is a gift of space, both physical and spiritual'. (1992:13) In this space the one seeking nurture '...is sure of the director's total acceptance...(1992:19). 'But, thank God, spiritual directors are not professionals, but amateurs who aspire to reflect Christ's love' writes Guenther.' (1992:17)

She also sees hospitality as a space where a person is listened to, tells their story and sorts through what they really want of their spiritual life; she seeing storytelling as a dance, ‘a dialogue; and sometimes the listener-director must become active and help shape the story’(1992:21). She continues: ‘And the story must reach into the future. Spiritual direction is about hope’ (1992:33) She ends her chapter on hospitality talking about a director being with what is uncomfortable : ‘To let them [people] into our space, our spiritual space if not our kitchens and living rooms, is a costly ministry, for they will cease to be invisible. We will see their full humanity, and we will see Christ in them’. (1992:41)

Guenther’s definition of Teaching:

The spiritual director is simultaneously ‘a learner and a teacher of discernment’ writes Guenther. This is a questioning role, she continues: ‘What is happening? Where is God in this person’s life? What is the story? Where does this person’s story fit in our common Christian? How is the Holy Spirit at work in this person’s life? What’s missing?’ (1992:44)

The role includes discernment. In turn she explains that the first step in discernment is perception and the second step judgement. She continues: ‘At the same time, by encouragement and example, he [the director] helps the directee to develop and trust her own powers of discernment’. (1992:45)

Guenther names the mentors for modern spiritual directors as the desert teachers [desert mothers and fathers]. She writes: ‘Yet as spiritual directors they [the desert fathers and mothers] were true educators in the truest sense of the word; they drew forth from their followers insights and understanding inherently present’ (1992:51). She also explains: ‘For the teacher-director the love of souls is a detached, contemplative love that wants nothing in return’. (1992:54) Guenther comments: ‘This marks one of the major differences between spiritual direction and psychotherapy: the director must be willing to be known – not just by

her credentials, affiliations and titles, but known in her vulnerability and limitations as a child of God'. (1992:58)

She further explains 'A good teacher [director-teacher] is vulnerable. She bears her own partially healed wounds, and scars and counts them among her gifts.' (1992:69)

Another mentor or example in many ways, according to Guenther, is Jesus by his ability to teach and draw lessons from everyday events and happenings, as well as his encouragement to his followers to look within and know themselves as well as trust their own discernment. (1992:45-51)

Describing the director-teacher further she explains: 'The spiritual director as teacher does not make the connections, although she may make observations, give hints (but without being manipulative), and ask the right questions'. (1992:59) She writes that the good teacher encourages play, knows her pupils' limits and is 'always hopeful'. (1992:65) Other attributes of a good teacher explains Guenther are the ability to ask questions and to encourage the directee to discover and embrace his own questions (1992:68).

Guenther's definition of midwifery

This aspect of spiritual direction Guenther labels as 'a ministry of presence, patience and waiting' (1992:94). She reminds us of the literal meaning of the word midwife which is 'with women' - 'that is, the person who is with the birthgiver' (1992:89). According to Guenther, it was 'Paul who describes the yearning for God in terms of the first stage of labour'¹⁵ (1992:86) and she embellishes this metaphor to describe others tasks of a spiritual director. As a midwife is present at a physical birth, so a spiritual nurturer is attendant during a spiritual birth or rebirth of a person.

¹⁵ KJV :Romans 8:22-23

Both midwife and nurturer work with people ‘in a time of vulnerability, working in areas that are deep and intimate’ (1992:89). Guenther explains the nurtured/directee experiences inner changes some joyful, others disturbing perhaps (1992:93), and writes ‘She [the director] can encourage and interpret when the birthgiver may feel that she has lost control and failed’ (1992:90). ‘She [the midwife] intervenes only when necessary and helpful, never for the sake of “doing something”’ (1992:95). According to Guenther, a spiritual director offers support through pivotal times of transition when a person is moving from one stage to another. (1992:95-102). Like a midwife Guenther writes: ‘the director’s task is to encourage, quite literally to give heart’ (1992:104).

Guenther names a paradox which she sees is true for both roles: ‘...the midwife is both important and insignificant’. She continues:

Yet midwives have never been grand or impressive figures. They have not sought the power which is theirs. They are humble. Similarly, the spiritual midwife is humble and, like her practical sister, always clear about her own identity and role in the drama of birthing. For spiritual directors the Holy Spirit is the true director. (1992:111-2)

There are naturally overlaps and repetitions between Guenther’s three aspects but the key processes of spiritual direction and nurture are well described here. Table 4.1 outlines the basic components of each aspect.

TABLE 4.1 : GUENTHER'S ASPECTS OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

HOSPITALITY	
Listening	
Offer love	
Respect	
Opening self to another : allows self to be touched	
Holding hope	
Caring	
Acceptance	
Seeing Christ in the other	
Offering safe space and time	
Help other tell their story	
TEACHER	
Questioning	
Discernment	
Perception	
Self-knowledge	
Self-acceptance	
Self awareness	
Show by example how to live	
A lover of souls	
Listen to directees truest voice	
Hold belief in the other	
Share self with the other	
Encourage	
Be realistic	
Play	
Is hopeful for the other	
MIDWIFE	
Ministry of presence, patience and waiting	
Assist in spiritual birthgiving of other	
Ordinary person who helps others	
Helps towards great self knowledge of other	
Helps other feel comfortable & free to be themselves	
Assists with natural event	
Is present – is there with the other	
Knows how and when to confront	
Able to wait and be with uncertainty	
Knows spiritual rhythms	
Can feel what's happening	
Encouraging	
Non-intervention – allowing	
Celebration at birth	
Comforting and supportive	
Allows vulnerability	
Has humility	

CHAPTER 5

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION AMONG EARLY QUAKERS

In this chapter I illustrate elements of spiritual direction found in letters and journals of early Friends. As Margaret Benefiel writes ‘Letters and epistles formed the backbone of the young Quaker movement...’ continuing ‘These letters and epistles wove the ties of community both within Meetings and throughout the Religious Society of Friends.’ (1996:443) Elsa F.

Glines organises Margaret Fell’s letters into four categories: 1. Letters to family and friends, 2. Letters of petition to those in authority, 3. Polemics, in which a person argues or tries to persuade non-Quakers or anti-Quakers, 4. Pastoral epistles [letters], either to an individual or to Friends Meeting (2003:xviii). The letters used here, in this work, are ‘pastoral letters to individuals’.

The writings are analysed here into two sections 1652-1658 and 1659-1684. The first section, whilst containing various illustrations of spiritual nurture from that time, looks in more depth at that given by Margaret Fell. The second section contains a more in-depth analysis of the nurture given by Isaac Pennington.

5.1. 1652-1658

Early Friend Richard Farnworth in a letter dated 12th December 1652 wrote to Margaret Fell ‘...O! be faithful, be faithful, in what thou knowest; and stand perfect in the will of the Lord: and the Lord will keep thee in his own power to Himself, and arm thee every way with his love and power....’ He continued:

...Give thyself up wholly to the Lord, who will preserve thee in faithfulness and purity; - and the everlasting Lord God Almighty keep thee and all the rest of our dear

Friends, in the power of his love, and in the power of his Truth, perfect in his will; that ye may grow from strength to strength and be established in the everlasting Truth ... (Barclay, 1841:357-8)

Given that Farnworth met Fox and was ‘convinced’¹⁶ around October 1651 (Nickalls 1975:73) and Fell first met George Fox in June 1652, Farnworth could be seen to be more experienced and therefore able to counsel Fell in Quaker ways as in this letter. The uplifting tone of the letter relays in words, perhaps, the glory of their new found faith as well as inspiring her to continue in her spiritual growth.

In a letter dated 9th May 1653, to an unknown Quaker friend, Anthony Pearson¹⁷ first writes about his despair and having ‘lost his religion’ but adds:

What thou told me of George Fox, I found true: when thou seest him or James Nayler, (they both know my condition better than myself) move them (if neither of them be drawn this way) to help me with their counsel by letter; they are full of pity and compassion; and though I was their enemy, they are my friends; and so is Francis Howgill, from whom I received a letter full of tenderness and wholesome advice...

Pearson goes on to ask for more letters to assist him. (Ross 1949:20-21) Here Pearson is talking about the quality of contact with both Fox and Nayler and asking for more assistance or spiritual counsel from them.

James Nayler in a letter to George Fox dated November 1654 reports having spent much time with Rice Jones and John Reckless when ‘much confusion did appear in him [Rice Jones] and to things of God he is exceeding dark above what I could have thought of him’. Nayler also reports much swearing from Rice Jones. Nayler clearly challenges them both and writes: ‘...I asked him what that living principle was in him that was not awakened as ever it was, but he

¹⁶ ‘Convincement’ or ‘convinced’ is a term used among early Quakers for someone who had undergone a full conversion experience to become a Quaker and thereafter follow the leadings of their inner Light/Truth. (Bauman 1998:28)

¹⁷ Anthony Pearson was a judge who was on the bench with Nayler, Fox and Howgill before him and who became ‘convinced’ and therefore looked kindly on Quakers who appeared before him (Braithwaite 1923:111) hence the reference to being ‘their enemy’.

was much confounded and could not cover it; much such confusion appeared which by the people there was plainly seen'. (Kuenning 2004:589). Here I understand Nayler to be challenging two men interested in Quakerism with the intention of them listening to 'the living principle'.

5.1.1. Margaret Fell

The majority of letters in this early period report the whereabouts of the Valiant 60¹⁸ and the successes and difficulties they experienced, together with information about which communities were welcoming and news of who was in which prison. However, one of the Valiant 60, Margaret Fell, became what is frequently referred to 'our nursing mother' (Ross 1984:13). Braithwaite wrote: 'Margaret Fell also took almost at once a place of unique service, becoming "a tender nursing mother unto many"' (1923:134) Ross also writes:

Margaret Fell did a different kind of work, which was complementary to his [George Fox] in an amazing way. She was for the first few years tied to her home¹⁹ and her family, but by her hospitality, her writings, her wide correspondence and her wisdom, she not only spread the knowledge of the Quaker interpretation of Christianity, but gave unity and fellowship to a scattered company of men and women of very varied background and experience. (1984:32-3)

Her letters containing spiritual direction are many. To Anthony Pearson, as mentioned above, she writes later in 1653:

My dear heart, wait upon the Lord in the light of God in thee... and it will bring the seed of God out of prison if thou hearken to it and be obedient to it..Be low and watchful, and mind that which keeps thy peace...it will lead thee to another Kingdom which is not of this world, which is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, and then thou wilt see the vanity and emptiness of these vanishing things, which all the world is busying themselves about, for the very fashion of this world shall pass away'. (Ross 1984:41)

¹⁸ The early Friends who travelled around the country ministering and bringing people to Quakerism were later known as 'The Valiant 60' they were made up of 66 Quakers in all – 54 men and 12 women. (Taylor 1947:40-41)

¹⁹ Margaret Fell lived at Swarthmore Hall, in Ulverston with her husband and eight surviving children. (Glines 2003:4)

To William Osborn²⁰ she writes: ‘My dear love is to thee, dear heart. Wait and be faithful to thy measure of the good word of God which thou hast received, that with it thou may see that which is contrary cut down. (Birkel 2008:15) She goes on to urge Osborn to be faithful to the Light, that interior word of God with which he is already acquainted, a word which is sharp and cutting and which discerns. Birkel 2008:16-17)

These letters are typical of Fell’s style of direction which emphasized the need to ‘wait in the Light’ and ‘be faithful to the Light’. The fervour in tone of her letters communicates her absolute belief in Quakerism and the power of ‘The Light Within’.

Fell also wrote to Friends who were suffering prison sentences as illustrated in a letter to William Dewsbury in the eighth month 1655:

‘...My dear Brethren stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free, Nott onely to beeleeve on him but alsoe to suffer for his sake, And doe not bend nor bow to the yoake of bondage of man’s will: But a fast unto the Lord God keepe, which yee are now called unto; which is to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undoe the heavy burden and to let the oppressed goe free and to breake every yoake (Isa. 58:6)²¹. (Glines 2003:139)

Benefiel writes:

In her letters to Friends in prison, Fell set their experience in the context of God’s larger work in the world. By placing imprisoned Friends in continuity with such biblical figures as Daniel, Fell transformed the images of imprisonment and freedom. Imprisoned Friends were portrayed as suffering in solidarity with all those who had suffered for their faith in ages past as well as with other Friends of their day.’ (1996:444-5)

Women were also sent to Fell for spiritual nurture and/or oversight. Sarah Knowles was sent (Ross 1949:38) as was Ellen Parr by James Nayler who wrote in 1653: ‘..Let her stay a while with thee, and show her the way of love, which is much lost in the heights’. (Barbour & Roberts 2004:471) Thomas Aldman in 1654 wrote: ‘...I have sent unto thy house from York,

²⁰ Letter written in 1657, William Osborn had been a lieutenant-colonel in Oliver Cromwell’s army. (Birkel 2008:14)

²¹ Isaiah 58 : 6 reads: Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? (KJV)

with Agnes Wilkinson, who hath acted contrary to the Light in filthiness, and is cast out with the Light with them who was partakers with her...(Barbour & Roberts 2004:472)

These women would have received personal spiritual nurture from Fell at Swarthmore Hall.

The importance of Fell's spiritual nurture can be seen in responses to her. Ann Audland wrote in 1654 '...by thee I am nourished. I see and feel thy care over all the lambs of my Father'. (Ross 1949:49) This is typical as is this written to her by William Caton in 1657:

And when I thus behold thee in the invisible, if I be in sufferings, I am comforted, if weary and heavy laden I am eased and refreshed, seeing thy hand stretched forth to me, to draw me nigher and nigher unto thee, that thou mayest take part with me of my sufferings...' (Ross 1949:67)

In the tenth month of 1658 Judge Thomas Fell died (Ross 1949:409) and this together with the Nayler incident²² and increased persecution and incarcerations of fellow Friends, appear to have changed the focus of Margaret's work. From this time onwards she was dealing with her family difficulties together with financial and other support to imprisoned Quakers and their estranged families and disagreements between leading Quakers.

5.2. 1659-1684.

By the mid-1650s Quakerism was strengthening in the south of England (Braithwaite 1923:185). Thomas Ellwood wrote about his struggles around becoming a Quaker as follows: 'Then thought I with myself, oh, how glad should I have been of a word of encouragement and counsel from him [Edward Burrough²³] when I was under that weighty exercise of mind. But the Lord saw it was not good for me, that my reliance might be wholly

²² On 24th October 1656 James Nayler ride into Bristol on a horse in an enactment of Christ's entrance into Jerusalem or of Christ's second coming. Although it was not unusual for Quakers to enact in this way this event was met with hostility from the authorities and indifference from Bristol Quakers, uneager to fuel local opposition to them. Nayler was arrested and tried for blasphemy for believing he was Christ. Nayler was imprisoned and ostracised by his fellow Quakers. (Dandelion 2007:39-41)

²³ Edward Burrough was one of the Valiant 60 (Taylor 1947:40).

upon Him, and not on man'. (Ellwood 1885:39). After much suffering and deliberation Ellwood became a Quaker and later writes '..Great was the love and manifold the kindness which I received from these my worthy friends, Isaac and Mary Penington, while I abode in their family. They were indeed as affectionate parents and tender nurses to me in this time of my religious childhood....' (1885:77)

It would appear from Ellwood's account that typically people were left to their own deliberations to decide to join the Quakers but, once decided, they were given ample support and nurture.

Stephen Crisp in 1684 wrote to William Penn²⁴ as follows:

Dear William, I have had a great exercise of spirit concerning thee, which none knows but the Lord;...I have had a sense of the various spirits, and intricate cares, and multiplicity of affairs, and they of various kinds, which daily attend thee, enough to drink up thy spirit, and tire thy soul; and which, if it is not kept to the inexhaustible Fountain, may be dried up. (Tuke 1824:7)

Crisp appears to be advising Penn to take care of his soul and not be corrupted.

Penn's reply includes: 'Stephen, we know one another, and I need not say much to thee;...I have also a letter from thee, which comforted me; for many are my trials, yet not more than my supplies, from my Heavenly Father, whose glory I seek, and the renown of his blessed Name...' (Tuke 1824:11). Penn's reply seems to say he remains connected to God doing God's work. This support and concern about Penn's soul was clearly unsolicited and a one-off, there is no evidence of other correspondence between the two men.

Again in 1684 William Dewsbury²⁵ writing to Edward Nightingale gives a directive concerning a separation happening among Quakers in York. I see this direction as a sign of

²⁴ William Penn in 1684 is dealing with non-Quakers over finances and generally promoting the new territory to Quakers and non-Quakers in Britain (Clarkson 1813 chapter xx)

keeping order within the Society rather than directly concerning Nightingale's spiritual life as he writes:

...But, of late I have heard that thou, my ancient Friend, Edward Nightingale and John Cox, with some others in that city, do meet together in a separating spirit apart from the rest of Friends in the city, which casts a stumbling-block in the way of many. And, instead of gathering people to receive the Truth, you scatter and drive them away;....

Later in the letter, he writes: '...I do assure you, it is the work of the enemy of your souls: for you should not have separated but have kept your places amongst Friends...' (Smith 1997:317-8)

5.2.1. Isaac Penington

Isaac Penington was a great spiritual nurturer during the latter half of the 1600s. His letters are many and he clearly supported individual Quakers over a period of time via letters including Elizabeth Stonar, Catherine Pordage, Thomas Warmesley. Below I look more deeply at his letters to one of his major correspondents (Keiser & Moore 2005:89-90), Widow Hemmings, and use seven letters written by Penington to Hemmings between 1670 and 1675²⁶.

The content of Penington's letters to Widow Hemmings contain a mixture of spiritual instruction, expression of his concern and expectations for her spiritual life and answering questions raised by her. In a letter dated 3rd of the sixth month 1670, Penington instructed Hemmings on communion. He wrote: 'There is a supper, or supping with Christ, beyond outward bread and wine, and let him in. Rev.3:20²⁷ Now it is *that* supper, it is the desire of

²⁵ One of the Valiant 60 (Taylor 1947:40).

²⁶ Letters used are: 3.6.1670 (Penington 1996:436-437), 26.8.1670 (Penington 1996:441-446), 28.9.1670 (Penington 1996:450-453), 9.11.1670 (Keiser & Moore 2005:90-91), 25.1.1671 (Penington 1996:469-470), 4.9.1673 (Penington 1996:501-502), 1.9.1675 Penington 1996:509-510).

²⁷ Rev. 3:20 (KJV) Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

my heart thou mayst be acquainted with, and partake of.' (1996:437) Again in a letter dated 25th of the first month 1671, written when the widow was ill, Penington instructs:

Mind not temptations nor accusations, nor the many noises the enemy will make in thee and against thee, to the Lord; but wait to feel truth and life springing in thy heart from the holy well, and to hear the still voice of the Spirit of the Lord; and he will testify his love to thee, and speak peace. (1996:469).

Here Penington is giving directive spiritual direction; his certainty is typical of his writings.

Again in the letter dated 26th of eighth month 1670, Penington's wishes and hopes for the widow's spiritual life are expressed:

My dear friend, the Lord give thee an understanding, and open thy heart, and cause thee to grow into union and into sense of his truth; that by growing up in the truth, thou mayst come more and more to understand it, and be acquainted with it (1996:437)

In a letter dated 26th of the eighth month 1670 again he wrote:

Now this morning when I awoke, there were three things sprang up in me, which my heart did singly and earnestly desire for thee. One was that thou mightst be led by God's Holy Spirit...Another was that thou mightst daily be taught of God and learn of him in this holy, new, pure and everlasting covenant. The third was, that thou mightiest be true and faithful to God, to obey and follow him, in whatever he teaches and requires of thee. (1996:441-2)

Perhaps Penington hoped also to inspire the Widow, certainly he seemed to be affirming her spiritual potential. Penington had not heard from the widow for some time and wrote in a letter dated the 4th of the ninth month 1673: 'And as the day dawns, and the day-star arises in thy heart, the shadows will flee away, and the substance be discovered, owned, and delighted in by thee'. (1996:502)

In a letter dated 28th of the ninth month 1670 the widow had obviously written to Penington with many questions and he answered them one by one. One can only guess at her questions. The first answer contained: '...For there is no true sense of one's condition, or of one's wants, but from the Spirit of the Lord;...(1996:451) The second answer included: 'Those that do not

know, nor are sensible partakers of the Spirit, yet feeling their want thereof, and true desires after it, ought to offer up those desire to God;...(1996:451) His third answer was: ‘...but the birth of life, the sensible breathings of his own life, in the poorest and weakest babe, are always of esteem, and prevail with the Father.’ (1996:452) Fourth and last started with: ‘The creature may misapprehend its duty, may have a wrong sense, apprehending *that* to be its duty which is *not*, and may not apprehend *that* to be its duty which is; and so, if the sense be wrong, then the act of obedience (according to this wrong sense) is wrong also, and is not accepted with the Father...(1996:452)

I imagine Penington was attempting to allay the Widow’s fears and worries voiced via her questions, thereby reassuring her on her spiritual journey. He finished this letter with:

Alas! what room is there for his Spirit and power, when there is such a multitude of thoughts, and workings, and reasonings, such a noise of flesh in many hearts and spirits? Happy is he who feels flesh silent, who comes to an end of his own willing and running, though that is a time of great distress, when the full mind is emptied and brought low; but then He that shows mercy is near, and the day of mercy is not far off to that soul. (1996:453)

Penington wrote of his concern for the widow’s spiritual well-being on the 26th of the eighth month 1670:

Since I last saw thee there have been many deep and serious thoughts on my heart concerning thee; and a sense of thy state as before the Lord, and breathings of heart for thee. I am sensible that the Spirit of the Lord is striving with thee, and in some measure opening thy heart towards him and his truth; and I am sensible withal, that there is much striving against him; and many strong-holds of wisdom and reasoning in thee, which must be broken down, before truth can spring up in thy heart and exercise its power in thee, and have full command in thee. (1996:441)

Later on the 1st of the ninth month 1675, I presume the widow is in much pain, as Penington wrote: ‘...Oh! what can hurt thee, if thy God stand by thee?What if the wicked nature, which is as a sea casting out mire and dirt, rage against thee!’ Here I understand him to have said the pain may be a cleansing force so in a true spiritual director style, pointing out the positive side of pain. He continued reassuringly: ‘There is a river, a sweet, still flowing river,

the streams whereof will make glad thy heart. And learn but in quietness and stillness to retire to the Lord, and wait upon him; in whom thou shalt feel peace and joy, in the midst of thy trouble from the cruel and vexatious spirit of this world'. (1996:510)

A practice often used in modern day spiritual direction is 'self-disclosure' and Penington interestingly used this in a letter to the Widow dated 26th of the eighth month 1670:

This is from one, who wandered long in the waste howling wilderness, wayless, from the Shepherd and Bishop of the soul; and was sorely afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted; but at length it pleased the Lord in tender mercy to visit me, and by his own outstretched arm, to gather me into his own fold....(1996: 445)

Penington's kindness and gentleness comes through his correspondence and this much loved quote contains the flavour of him:

Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying one for another, and helping one another up with a tender hand. (*Quaker Faith and Practice* 1994:10.01)

5.3. Chapter Summary

In summary it is possible to find Guenther's aspects of hospitality, teacher and midwife in all these early Quaker experiences (see Table 5.1) Stephen Crisp is questioning of William Penn and perhaps can be seen as offering realism – as would a teacher. George Fox, Richard Farnworth, James Nayler and Francis Howgill are all described as role models, again teachers as well as offering hospitality and midwifery.

Margaret Fell is labelled 'a tender nursing mother' clearly a midwife role as well as teacher and offering hospitality. Isaac Penington, together with his wife Mary, were described by Thomas Ellwood as 'affectionate parents and tender nurses to me', again Penington is clearly a midwife to early Quakers as well as offering hospitality and much teaching.

I would add that the spiritual nurture of all these early Quakers has continued to give sustenance and guidance to those who came after them and continues to this day through their writings. The key teachings of waiting in the Light and being guided by the Light have remained at the core of Quakerism.

TABLE 5.1 GUENTHER'S ASPECTS OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION FOUND (√) OR NOT FOUND (X) AMONG EARLY QUAKERS

HOSPITALITY	Found or not
Listening	√
Offer love	√
Respect	√
Opening self to another : allows self to be touched	√
Holding hope	√
Caring	√
Acceptance	X
Seeing Christ in the other	√
Offering safe space and time	√
Help other tell their story	X
TEACHER	Found or not
Questioning	√
Discernment	√
Perception	√
Self-knowledge	√
Self-acceptance	√
Self awareness	√
Show by example how to live	√
A lover of souls	√
Listen to directees truest voice	√
Hold belief in the other	√
Share self with the other	√
Encourage	√
Be realistic	√
Play	X
Is hopeful for the other	X
MIDWIFE	Found or not
Ministry of presence, patience and waiting	√
Assist in spiritual birthgiving of other	X
Ordinary person who helps others	√
Helps towards great self knowledge of other	√
Helps other feel comfortable & free to be themselves	√
Assists with natural event	√
Is present – is there with the other	√
Knows how and when to confront	√
Able to wait and be with uncertainty	√
Knows spiritual rhythms	√
Can feel what's happening	√
Encouraging	√
Non-intervention – allowing	√
Celebration at birth	√
Comforting and supportive	√
Allows vulnerability	√
Has humility	√

CHAPTER 6

THE INTERVIEW FINDINGS

As explained in an earlier chapter, the primary exploration of this project was to elicit who the interviewees had gone to for spiritual nurture. Secondary inquiry was around the spiritual nurture they gave to others.

The analysis, explained earlier, was accomplished using grounded theory, and data was analysed by noting each contact made, considered by the interviewee, to have a spiritual nurture component.

All spiritual nurture contacts were then divided into categories and sub-categories to allow for commonalities, similarities and any patterns to be found.

The main spiritual nurture contact categories are as follows:

1. individual people,
2. groups,
3. community, and
4. media.

The sub-categories within each main category are explained below.

All sub-categories were further divided into female and male interviewees and then averaged out to look for commonalities or otherwise. (See Table 6:1)

TABLE 6 . 1 : CATEGORY AND SPIRITUAL NURTURE CONTACTS : DATA ANALYSIS

CATEGORY	CONTACTS MADE	AVERAGE PER INTERVIEWEE (11)	AVERAGE PER FEMALE (8)	AVERAGE PER MALE (3)
Individual people	Female 97 Male 30 Total 127	11.5	12.1	10
Groups	Female 31 Male 9 Total 40	3.6	3.9	3
Community	Female 21 Male 13 Total 34	3.1	2.6	4.3
Media	Female 27 Male 5 Total 32	2.9	3.4	1.7

It needs to be noted by the reader that it is difficult to be completely clear when defining the nature of contacts as it is just not clear at times. For example, when an interviewee named a group leader, was this spiritual nurture contact within a group context or individual person context? When uncertainties arose the researcher interpreted as best she could.

6.1. The Overview

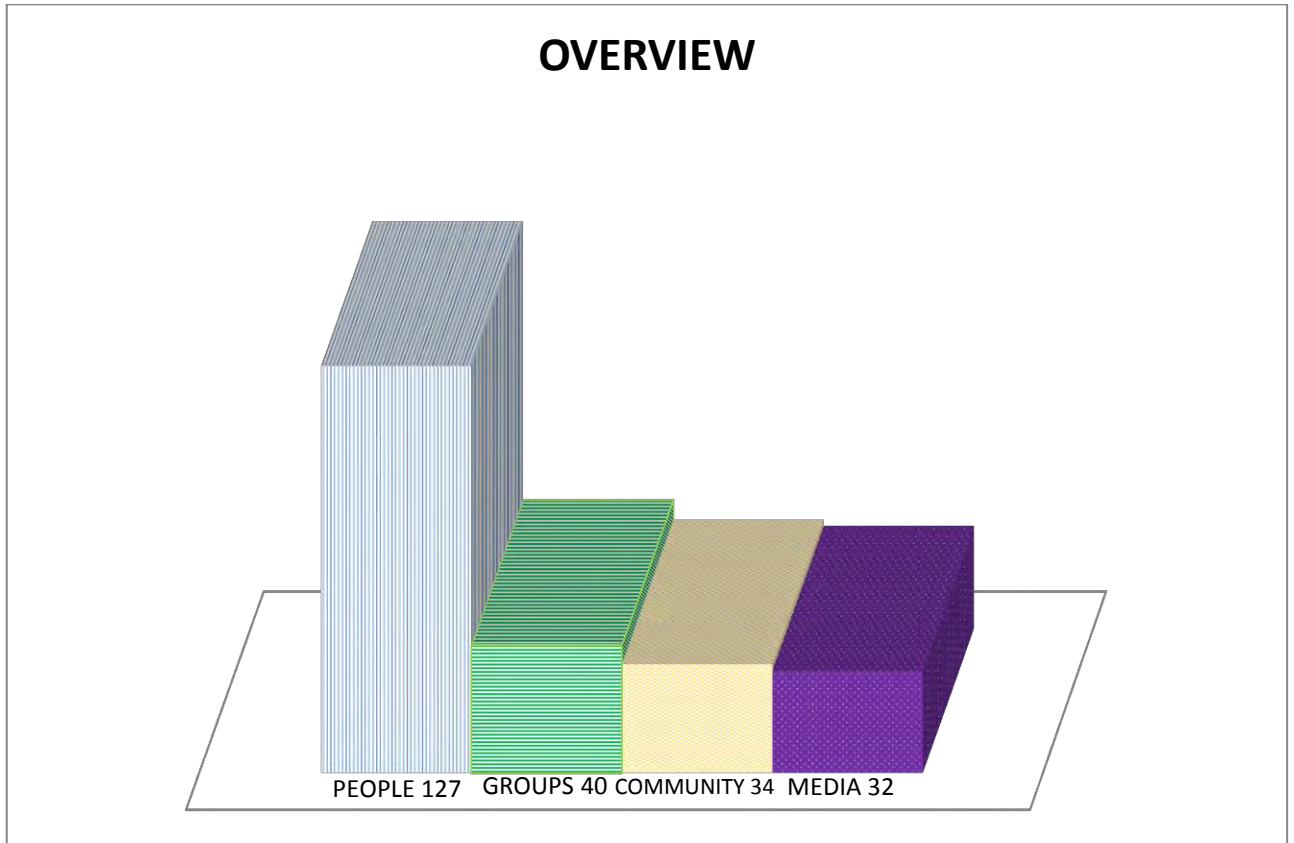


FIGURE 6.1 OVERVIEW OF SPIRITUAL CONTACTS OF INTERVIEWEES IN THE MAIN CATEGORIES

There are 233 spiritual nurture contacts noted throughout the eleven interviews (see Figure 6.1). The breakdown is as follows:

127 sighted contacts with individual people
40 sighted contacts with groups
34 sighted contacts with a community of some kind
32 sighted contact via media.

6.2. Spiritual Nurture Contacts with Individual people

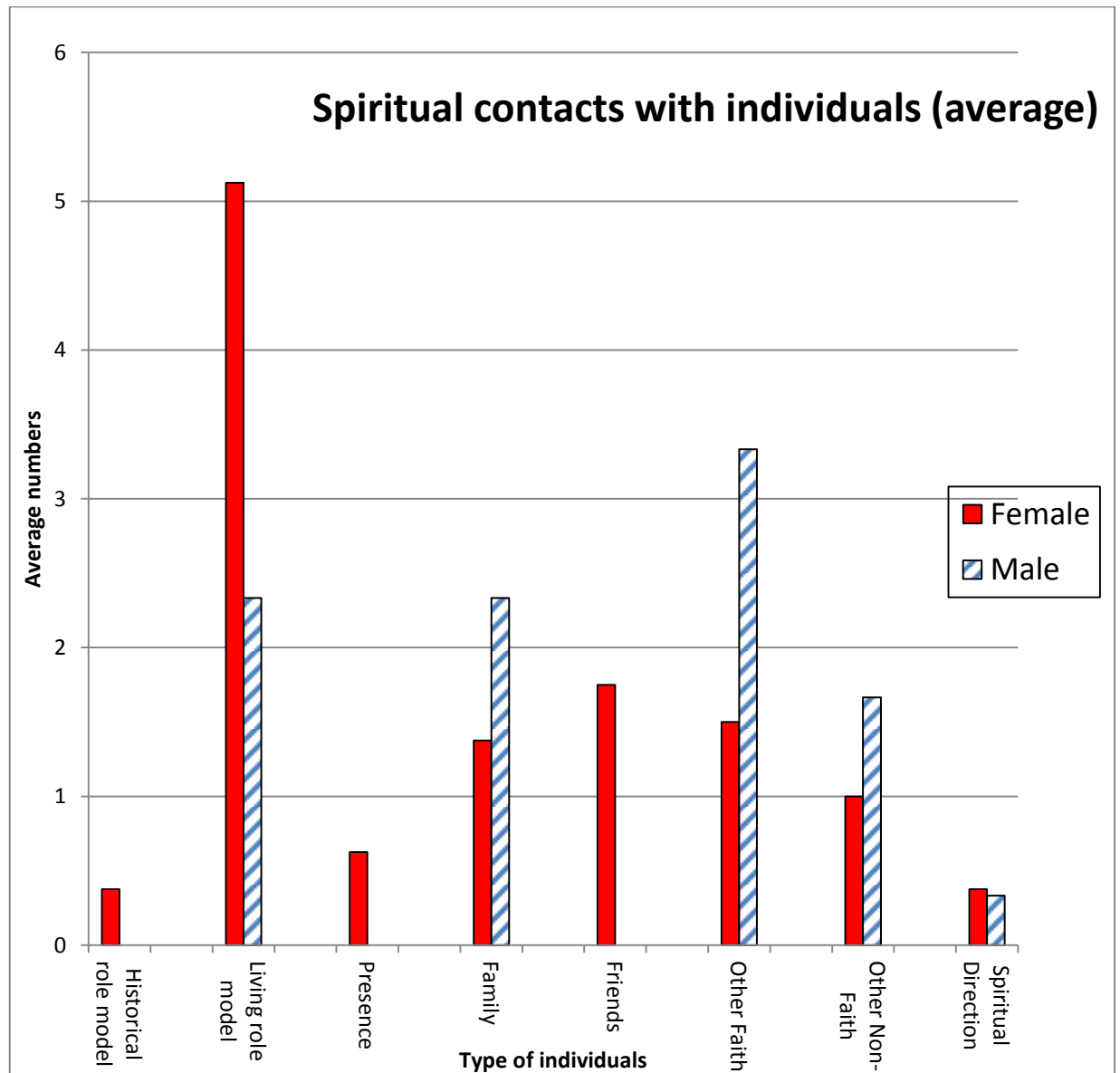


FIG. 6.2 Spiritual contacts with individuals (average)

This chapter contains six categories (see Figure 6.2).

- i) **Role models** – those people who had influenced the interviewee in some way by what they said or how they live, or perhaps people who seemed to be experienced as

‘possessed by the Spirit’ (Leech, 2001:84/5) one of Leech’s definitions of a spiritual director. This category is divided into two:

- a) Historical, not living.
- b) Living.
- ii) **Presence** : contact with people described as having had ‘presence’ specifically or described in a similar way : someone experienced as embodying the spiritual as opposed to being a role model.
- iii) **Family**: where interviewees reported spiritual support and nurture from family members.
- iv) **Friends**: where interviewees reported spiritual support and nurture from friends.
- v) **Other** : this category is split into two:
 - a) Faith Connected : these include specific members of their Local Quaker meeting together with contact with priests, spiritual teachers, etc.
 - b) Non-faith connected : these include counsellors and teachers.
- vi) **Spiritual Director/Spiritual Friendship.**

6.2.1. Role models

The research defines ‘role model’ as people who have influenced the interviewee on their journey or set them an example.

a) Historical people

Two females claimed nurture by three historical contacts.²⁸

Two historical figures were Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Gandhi; the third contact was named by Esta citing ordinary historical Quakers in general and who was struck by ‘...Quaker

²⁸ This averages out to 0.38 per female and nil per male.

lives and these are people that probably nobody hardly has heard of and the things they have achieved and done...'. She went on to explain how, for her, how to live a Quaker life is drawn from historical Quakers and through how they lived their life rather than by their rhetoric.

b) Present day

This is the largest influence-group. 41 contacts by females and 7 contacts by males among current living people who have been of influence.²⁹

Esta named a minister she knew as a child as a role model but otherwise she had found these among her Local Meeting. Her journey into Quakers had been via Quaker Quest³⁰ where she described hearing one speaker say '...well I don't know what I'm doing here because the topic is what do Quakers think about God and I never think about God, never feel the need, but I am a Quaker' and Esta explained 'this really drew me in' and how she then took up the invitation and went to Meeting'. Commenting on this she added '...in a sense I really don't think about God but there is with me a sense of something inexplicable, a presence, a Oneness, and if some people call that God that's fine. I don't actually feel I need to identify it, it just is'. I got the impression the speaker at Quaker Quest affirmed Esta's own experience by mirroring.

Another member of her LM influenced Esta by their open and honest manner. This especially showed when she attended an on-going group and was sent away to ponder on the question 'would we die to protect our beliefs?' Esta reported that by the next week:

²⁹ This gives an average of 5.1 per female and 2.3 per male.

³⁰ Quaker Quest is the title of events, organised by local Quakers, where people new to Quakers can attend in order to hear about Quakerism by Members talking about their experiences and understandings of the Quaker way. (Quaker Quest Network 2008) www.quakerquest.org accessed 24.9.2012

...I still hadn't made up my mind by the time we came back to give our various answers and the facilitator said 'when I think about it I would only really die to protect my family and probably myself' and that seemed to me such a wonderful answer...it was a really human answer and yet I did get a sense that she was a very spiritual person, she was a Quaker and if you like it was all right for her to say that...

Here again I sensed Esta as having been given permission to own her own beliefs and reaction. This was replicated elsewhere in the interviews.

Another example is William who explained: 'And certainly growing up there were key individuals in my Local Meeting who I would remember as not really what they said but just how they were...and who they were'. Asked to say more, he continued 'Well their being there, just being in the Meeting, presumably they probably ministered but how they lived their lives, how they related to me.....I still remember, I don't know, half a dozen people who were important influences in my Quaker understanding of life and Quaker thought'.

When talking about the influence of people in her Local Meeting, Anne explained:

They are people you can talk to and they are emotionally and mentally robust enough to hold you, that they have a way about them where you know you can share with them, you could ring them if you had a real trouble, and ask if it was a good time.... and what they feed back to you would be something that would be so sensible that would help you see whatever was troubling in a slightly different light, it would help release you in some way, help you untangle what was on your mind...'

Brenda named influential Quakers as having been key people in her early life when she was involved with national groups and named two as Quaker-mentors. She explained:

...there were a number of key women who I could see living a life either as parents or as workers or you know as women so there's always been a strong female model of different kinds, didn't really matter about what theology they wouldn't have talked about that very much, who I would seek out or... identify as sort of my Quaker women saints living now....

This interviewee, at the time of interview, was involved in a national Quaker body and talked of how she valued being part of a Quaker organisation where together they '...discern the

right way forward in... with an overt Quaker practice in our decision making and in our relationships in how we try to do what we do....'. Brenda went on to explain how she found both challenge and support in this work and from the fellow Quakers involved.

Other interviewees named 'weighty Friends'³¹ as being of influence. Whilst attending an Attender's Weekend³², Ethyl's first contact with Quakers, George Gorman³³ who was the course leader, advised her '..when you go home go to your Local Meeting'. Ethyl responded to this directive style of contact and she went on to say, '...I reached home'. When asked who else has been of influence Ethyl mentioned two fellow Quakers in her Meeting.

Jon also named a 'weighty Friend' as being of influence and described her as 'a very caring person in a restrained way and practical, pragmatic and consistent'. He explained this Friend gave him assistance and nurture further along the way. From earlier in his life, Jon named role models in a Christian group within the armed services and I sensed within this group he found belonging which in turn influenced his next steps.

Anne explained the majority of spiritual influence had come from non-Quakers sources yet this led her to Quakers. When interviewed Anne felt spiritually sustained in her non-Quaker volunteer work and explained '...she [the administrative worker] thanks me for being... she thanks you for existing..'. Again in her work life, Anne remembered feeling appreciated particularly by one manager who, she explained, 'saw the good in me and appreciated me and made clear that I knew I was appreciated...'.

³¹ 'Weighty Friends' as described by Dandelion are Friends who '...carry weight, operate an unofficial leadership role, under the cover of corporate discernment and the idea of the priesthood of all believers'. (2007:207)

³² Referring to a residential weekend held for Attenders and/or people new to Quakers interested in learning more about Quakerism.

³³ George Gorman (1916-1982) was an influential Quaker and writer on Quakerism.

6.2.2 Presence³⁴

Two interviewees mentioned being influenced by the ‘presence’ of a person and a third talked about an ‘influential person’ in similar terms to ‘presence’ without using the actual the word’.

There are a total of five contacts named or judged to be ‘presence’³⁵

In answer to the question ‘Can you think of any other people, Quakers or otherwise, who have been of influence, Anne answered: ‘There are lots of lovely people who I feel have a wonderful presence about them at that Meeting..’ she then went on to specify two.

Rachel had two very different experiences of presence. As a child she remembered the ‘presence’ of a nun who taught her explaining ‘I remember her still as a very benevolent presence...she sort of radiated benevolence, caring for the children...I just remember a kind of atmosphere, a sense of being cared for....’ Rachel also experienced and experiences spiritual ‘presence’ in nature and remembered waking up one night when:

...I felt that the forest was communicating with me and telling me that I was part of it...it was a really powerful feeling... I didn’t know what to make of it at the time... I was trying to sort of seek it out again... I felt this sense of some kind of its...turned into a realisation that it was a spiritual thing...and that was why I ended up going to Quakers because some friends here go to Quakers told me that they wouldn’t think I was made if I said that I thought God was in the forest so I ended up thinking God was in the forest...that’s what God is for me.

Ethyl, when asked for memories of people of spiritual influence, mentioned a neighbour whom she described as ‘a lovely old boy’.

³⁴ Presence – this word has been used as it was used by two of the interviewees and it is herewith used to indicate ‘a person possessed by the spiritual’ as Leech writes. He continues ‘The [spiritual] director’s role, says Merton, was not in any sense hierarchical, but “was purely and simply charismatic”’ (Leech 2001:84)

³⁵ This averages out at 0.62 per female and nil per male.

6.2.3 Family

Four females name between them eleven spiritual contacts via family while two males name seven contacts.³⁶

Brenda grew up surrounded by a plethora of relatives and described her early family environment as having:

‘...a warm approach to faith as something that was enacted in your life and you didn’t talk about it very much but it was an important part of family occasions... so there would be international travellers from either churches or Quakers coming through the home, it was just part of how people lived’.

She went on to explain herself as ‘...well spiritually nurtured by everybody’. Talking about her current family experience, which is sharing Quaker experience with her partner, she said ‘...we’re lucky to both be able to go to Meeting and see that as an important part of our lives is deeply reinforcing for the other...’.

Marigold also named her partner as a spiritual contact recalling ‘...being really upset in Meeting one day...it [an upsetting incident] came up as ministry³⁷.... me standing up and just crying.... No I didn’t talk it through he just reached across and went like that [he held her hand]....’

Ethyl named her parents explaining: ‘...it seems to me that my spiritual journey began at the dining table at home...’.

William also named his parents as influential, particularly his father, and recounted:

³⁶ This averages out as 1.4 per female and 2.3 per male.

³⁷ Ministry among Quakers means ‘service’. Here Marigold is referring to ‘ministry of the word’, when ‘the worshipper is moved to stand up and to speak from his or her experience’. (Gillman 1988 :29)

Well my father was more overtly concerned about the world and about religion and spirituality and peace and did less obvious about it, he thought about it and talked about it and was a very calm, peaceful, gentle man whereas my mother was the person who did all the work and supported me and made sure everything happened in the house and was always there and showed more physical care and love for me.....

He also cited his wife along with her parents and commented 'I valued their input into my life enormously because they've shown concern and interest and care for me and yet come from a very different place to my parents...'.

Her mother was named by Rachel along with her husband and mother-in-law, both described as being 'loving'.

During time away from his family as a child, two women, known as aunts, had been influential in Jon's early spiritual life. He described one aunt as '...having blazed the trail...' and how whilst staying with her, '... Church was very much sort of there, it was part of the fabric of life...'. About the second aunt he described her as '... having laid the foundation [of his spiritual life].. and yes, she gave assistance certainly...'.

6.2.4 Friends

Fifteen spiritual contacts are identified by five females.³⁸

Ethyl named the most spiritual contacts via friends, namely six. She remembered two women who had been friends of her mother and she spoke of them as '...lovely friends... miner's wives used to come and visit us and I think they were quite a spiritual influence ...these

³⁸ This averages out as 1.8 per female and nil per male.

lovely women ...thought I was wonderful' and, with further probing, agreed she had felt loved by them. She also named her god-mother who, whilst I was a child, '... talk to me about these strange people who sat in silence....' and speculated this probably influenced her approaching Quakers later in her life.

Another friend/ex-partner had given her encouragement in her career. Ethyl explained how they fell madly in love and added '..call that spiritual if you like...'. Ethyl named two further friends who she corresponds with and another friend, also a Quaker, who gave support to her through a sad time in life.

Rachel named friends as well and explained how she values talks with friends, listening and being listened to.

Talking about one particular friend, Rachel explained: 'there are certain people that just have this ability to reach out and care for other people, sort of sense their needs and listen to them, but I think a lot of people here [in UK] are afraid to do that..'.

Conversations with a particular friend are remembered as important by Marigold '...we would speak both ways about what mattered in life...though I doubt if God would have been mentioned....'.

Supportive friends are important to Brenda who particularly named a small number of long-term close friends who she met in her early Quaker days. She explained: 'And I think there are different kinds of spiritual guidance that you might get aren't there and good close friends who you will have that kind of discussion with on a more peer to peer level...'

For Faith, one particular friend had been important, ‘...Well I do remember certainly...discussing spiritual matters and religion and belief - that kind of friendship’ and she recalled when both lived a distance apart ‘a time of quite intense letter exchange’. She continued: ‘...there was an intellectual match I suppose... Questioning minds. People who were not happy to accept what we were told as though it was the absolute right understanding and interpretation, ...both of us were people who were inclined to read up on things and question things and seek alternative views on things...’.

6.2.5 Other

a) Faith connected

There are twenty-two contacts in this category by eight interviewees.³⁹

Jon has most contacts in this category from remembering in his early days a Sunday School teacher ‘who’s memory is still quite strong’ to three priests and one nun he had contact with along the way. Esta remembered ‘...we had a really charismatic minister and he was wonderful and he would give these really inspirational sermons...’.

Marigold and Jon both mentioned Quakers. Marigold named one Quaker at her Local Meeting and two course leaders explaining: ‘...I felt very held, contained, understood, loved....’; of the other ‘..he seemed to be very on my wavelength....as though he really understood where I was really coming from’. Jon remarked ‘...like people you meet along

³⁹ This averages out as 1.5 per female and 3.3 per male.

the way and then you sort of draw from them when you meet them and then life goes on...’.

Brenda also named Quaker tutors.

Someone being interested and supportive is important to Ruth. She particularly remembered a time when a Member of her Local Meeting encouraged her to attend an event and remembered being asked: ‘Are you going ?.... come on Ruth, it’s great fun, you must come’. Ruth explained: ‘...the fact that someone encouraged me to do something, that really helped, again it made me feel accepted, part of it and valued..’. Esta named a similar experience.

Ann mentioned her Overseer⁴⁰ as helping her feel part of the Meeting explaining: ‘..he is an excellent facilitator, he is also my Overseer... he has a very good light touch with people’.

Faith reported occasional spiritual support from clergymen ‘...who I might have gone to but it wasn’t usually specifically about spiritual aspects of things...’. She recalled ‘I used to speak regularly with a clergyman and it wasn’t about spiritual matters it was more to be about psychological and emotional matters ... and in some loose sense I was seeing him for counselling...he wouldn’t really be classed formally as a counsellor as he wasn’t qualified in that area’.

b) Non-Faith Connections

There are thirteen spiritual contacts in this category involving eight interviewees again – six females and two males.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Overseers have a pastoral role within their Quaker Meeting. Their responsibilities are to be found in QF&P 12.13.

Whilst recalling a school teacher, Alistair commented: ‘...he used to show quite a bit of interest in my development...maybe he just had a knack of making a contact with particular kids....he had faith in you....saw the best in you’. The second contact in this category for Alistair was a counsellor he saw for a short while recalling: ‘...I was telling her what was going on and she was horrified really, it was a sort of confirmation of what I knew was true...’.

A number of the other interviewees had experience of counselling or psychotherapy and all seemed to have found the sessions and/or the relationship supportive. Of one counsellor Anne explained: ‘...it was the relationship with him that did it [brought about healing] and as Rogers⁴² said, if you’ve got the relationship you don’t need anything else...’. Ruth benefited from counselling and finds talking to a stranger helpful to clarify things, she explained ‘...what she [the counsellor] was doing was helpful and it did make me think, it shifted me in a way, so it was helpful....’.

Marigold mentioned a co-counselling relationship as offering her close relationship and great understanding but described a lack of a [spiritual] connection as follows: ‘I had an image of me trying to stay afloat and sort of she can’t hold me up, she can’t life save me somehow’.

Esta named influences from two art tutors explaining: ‘I’ve noticed more and more if I go along to anything [courses], cause there are all sorts of things on offer, if that person [the tutor] hasn’t some level of spiritual awareness I’m less likely to find something valuable in the course whatever it is and it’s more likely to be about art or literature....’.

⁴¹ This averages out at 1 per female and 1.7 per male.

⁴² Referring to Carl Rogers the founder of Rogerian Counselling

School teachers had given support to both Ethyl and Jon. Ethyl described a particular teacher as ‘...very strict and she had very definite boundaries...’ and speculated ‘..because of the way she taught I probably got the scholarship... I think education is the way to most things...’.

The direction of Ethyl’s life was in turn influenced by the scholarship. A history teacher left an impression on Jon. He remembered her not evangelising, ‘...but every so often she just let slip something.... I can remember her saying once in a discussion group she believed that God had a plan for this world, and it’s those sorts of things which really stuck with me but there was that help while I was at that stage...’. Jon also recalled two successive headmasters at his secondary school being of great influence recalling ‘...assemblies were Christian based and that had quite an influence on me...’.

6.2.6 Spiritual Direction/Friendship

Two interviewees have experience of spiritual direction - Jon and Marigold.

Spiritual accompaniment is an easier word for Marigold to use and she reported the experience of various forms over the years with various people. Talking about one episode she recalled ‘...I don’t think we had a name for it but it was making meaning so it was talking in quite a spiritual way and rather in a co-counselling way...’. Marigold had recently completed a training course in spiritual direction during which she experienced a deal of giving and receiving direction.

Jon reported having attended spiritual direction for some years during the 1990s explaining: ‘..after a little while he [the spiritual director] suggested that we should regard ourselves as

spiritual companions which implied that it was going to be both ways...but you see being selfish I don't think that was quite what I was looking for'.

6.2.7. Discussion of Data of Spiritual Contacts via Individual People

The main category of spiritual nurture contacts with individual people has by far the most named contacts, there being a total of 127.⁴³ All interviewees name at least two sub-categories within this category..

This would indicate a propensity to human influence and this would equate to spiritual direction being given and received via human relationship. However, only two interviewees had experience of defined spiritual direction relationships. Of the other types of spiritual nurture available, for women the highest average (5.1) of contacts is gained within the sub-category 'living role model'. For men the highest average (3.3) is found in the 'other faith' category. Next highest for women is 'friends' (1.8), then 'family' (1.4), 'other faith' next (1.5), 'other non-faith' (1) with 'presence' (0.6) bringing up the rear and 'historical role model' last (3.8). For males 'living role models' (2.3) and 'family' (2.3) come joint second highest and 'other non-faith' (1.7) next.

Although all interviewees, female and male, gain the majority of their spiritual nourishment from individual people, women name more – an average of 12.1 per female interviewee as opposed to an average of 10 per male interviewee. All eight sub-categories are named by

⁴³ This averages out at 11.5 per interviewee : 12.1 per female and 10 per male.

women and five out of the eight sub-categories are named by men. 'Historical role model', 'presence' and 'friends' have no mention by men.

The category of 'individual people' is where most spiritual nurture is experienced. The fact that no men mentioned 'friends' as spiritual nurturing may be of slight interest as it potentially raises a question around male friendships. The fact that no men mention 'historical' or 'presence' as having spiritual nurture content may point to the fact that both these categories are non-reality in nature and perhaps can be seen as having a high imaginative content.

6.3 Groups/Courses

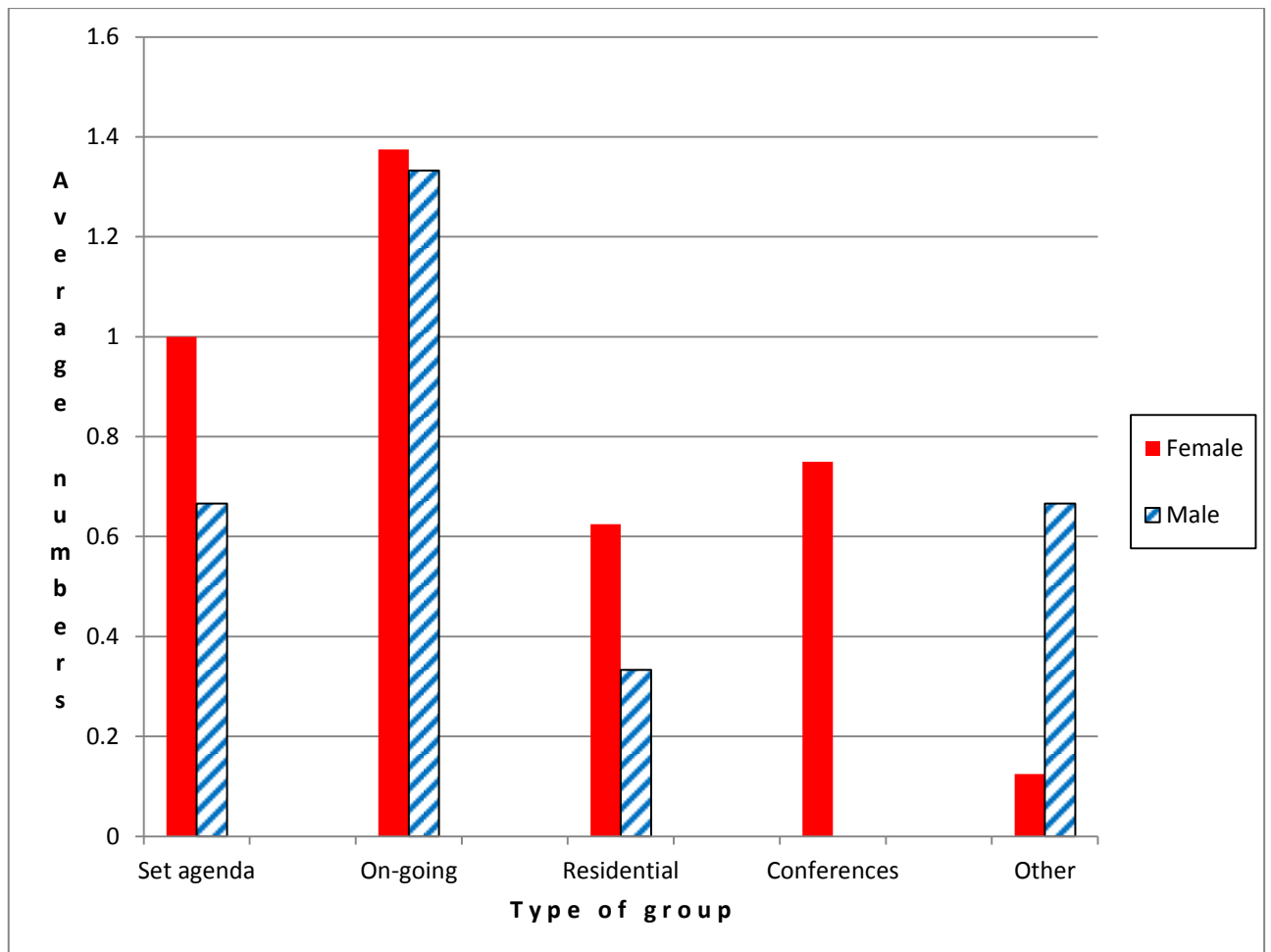


FIG. 6 : 3 Spiritual contacts via groups (average)

This category comprises of five sub-categories (see Figure 6.3):

- i) Set agenda groups : courses which follow a prescribed formula
- ii) On-going groups : groups which continue over a number of weeks which have no prescribed formula e.g. sharing group, creative art group etc.
- iii) Residential groups : retreats, and general courses away from home and includes Quaker Quest events
- iv) Conferences : attendance at weekend courses at Woodbrooke, etc.

- v) Other : courses and groups which do not fit into the above.

6.3.1 Courses with a prescribed content

Ten contacts are named from set agenda courses involving five interviewees. One interviewee names four contacts citing three professional training courses as being of influence on her spiritual journey. This interviewee also named attending a course entitled ‘Becoming Friends’⁴⁴ and explained: ‘It’s nice to be with some of the Quakers and being together in a slightly different way to how you are on Sunday’. She clarified: ‘...it [the course] is about the process and the people rather than the details and facts...’.

Ruth reported her disappointment when first going to Quaker Meetings,

....I had loads of questions... I was a very earnest seeker, and I was expecting people to be in the coffee room wanting to talk about burning issues...I was disappointed that people didn’t want to talk about anything like that.... but then I found there were groups you could go along to and that’s what began to help me.

Here she was referring to a Quaker programmed course entitled ‘Gifts and Discoveries’⁴⁵; reflecting on that course she explained ‘...it wasn’t just about spiritual, it was about feeling accepted and part of the Meeting and getting to know people in the Meeting and being part of that community...’.

Speaking about the role of a course facilitator, Ruth commented: ‘They [the facilitator] were important because they had the energy and commitment to take it on and make sure it ran’.

About her attendance at another Quaker pack course, Ruth again talked about the role of the

⁴⁴ ‘Becoming Friends’ is a structured course designed to help those who are new to Quakers find out more about Quakerism, explore their own understanding of and connection with different aspects of the faith and get to know Quakers better. (Wall 2010) www.quaker.org.uk/becoming-friends

⁴⁵ Gifts and Discoveries was a set agenda course in late 1980s-early 1990s and was a course for Friends and Attenders who wanted to undertake a sustained exploration of their faith and its basis for service.

facilitator explaining ‘Well it was the group really they [the facilitators] were very competent and calm and they didn’t dominate but, it wasn’t about their personalities it was about their ability to lead the worship sharing...it really wasn’t about them.’ She went on to explain the importance of boundaries for her on courses, and for practical reasons, that courses finish on time.

Talking about two Quaker programmed courses attended, Esta explained: ‘...it wasn’t the material that particularly struck me as being inspirational but it was the various people who were on thoseI was constantly being astonished at how utterly open and honest they were prepared to be’.

Alistair on the other hand appreciated the accompanying course literature but qualified this by saying: ‘I like the idea of a booklet asking the questions and giving you some things to work through and going through them with a series of people but... if I put the energy and effort into them I would get a lot more out of them than I actually have...’. He generally values groups and was involved in an on-going Quaker course at the time of interview.

William also values Quaker structured learning courses and, like Alistair, noted: ‘...I do think you do need to put individual effort into them...it doesn’t have to be perfect but you do need to put enough in to actually gain something’.

6.3.2. On-Going Groups with no prescribed content.

Fifteen spiritual contacts are named in this category by ten interviewees.

Four interviewees specifically mention the importance of on-going sharing and/or discussion groups as a way of getting to know each other better. Rachel, when asked why she had enjoyed a particular group, explained: ‘...the opportunity to listen to other people talking and to talk yourself about spiritual matters....’.

At the time of interview Faith did not attend an on-going discussion group and reported missing that and talked of valuing small groups as a place ‘...to get to know each other spiritually... [where] time is set aside to focus in more depth on some particular aspect of Quaker life or teaching or understandings of things or to explore what those understandings might be for that group of people...’.

Brenda remembered, as a teenager, the joys of discussing spiritual and social issues with people of her own age. More recently she again had been part of a group explaining ‘.... the power of small groups and just knowing people and living lives together in our Meeting...everybody was sharing...it didn’t have any great intellectual content but was about being together... and as this eccentric slightly odd group of individuals and I valued that highly’.

Ruth remarked that going along to a small discussion group had been very important to her development and explained what happened when she was asked to give a presentation to the group:

...I gave a quick presentation and it was the first time I had done anything like that and I was petrified but in the room people were so positive, I could tell they were listening and I began to change...the support ... it was supportive... I felt that people there weren’t trying to find fault with me so it helped me grow as a person.

Talking about a small Local Meeting he had been involved with, William explained: ‘.. as well as Meeting for Worship, we had a monthly discussion group in some peoples’ houses

and that happened every month for years and that was a really important part of the community.... we got to know each other as people...' and went on to speculate that this may not happen in a larger Meeting.

Two interviewees had been involved in a local Experiment with Light⁴⁶ group. Asked what assisted her in the Light Group, Ruth replied: 'It was practice, it was the discipline of it, the quiet, asking the question....'. Ethyl also mentioned an Experiment with Light group explaining: '...it's not the same doing it [the practice] on your own really... it's much better shared because ... you can hear what other people are getting out of it...'.

Early on in her contact with Quakers, Ethyl remembered being influenced whilst attending a local Healing and Prayer Group and recalled: '...I had this feeling that healing prayer was actually happening and there was a spiritual, divine force... so that healing prayer worked...'.

Marigold experienced spiritual awakening whilst protesting at Greenham Common together with on-going attendance at a women's peace group. At the time of the interview she regularly attended a Buddhist group and reported valuing the silence, the sitting and meditation experienced within this group.

Alistair explained he had, in his past, been spiritual shopping. During this time he had attended a spiritual/philosophical course and was introduced to self-reflection and later on to the practice of meditation something which is still central to his spiritual life.

⁴⁶ The Experiment is a process developed in an attempt to rediscover the power of early Friends' practice details to be found in book by Rex Ambler(2002). 'Experiment with Light' groups offer the opportunity for its members to partake in a structured practice of meditation and discernment based on a method devised by early Quakers. www.experiment-with-light.org.uk

6.3.3. Residential, retreats including Quaker Quest events

A total of six spiritual contacts are named in this category by four interviews.

As an adult as well as a teenager, Ruth valued Quaker retreats and explained: ‘...it’s like recharging your batteries and I find that helps me ... Quaker values are not the values of the wider world necessarily and to be with people where certain things are a given .. it’s uplifting and I sort of come away feeling energised’.

In the past, one of the ways Anne connected to her spiritual was through attending various non-Quaker retreats commenting ‘..I started for the company..’ and this, plus other allied activities led her eventually to take an active part in a Quaker Meeting. Whilst on a particular retreat she had an intense spiritual experience which lasted 24 hours and she disclosed: ‘It [the spiritual experience] proved to me that there is a God...There is a oneness’.

Buddhist retreats were named as important to two interviewees. Talking about retreats

Marigold explained:

It feels very nourishing... it feels like the way we all need to be living but aren’t...we only do it for a week, caring for each other and caring for ourselves, it feels like a very loving space, it’s rather like utopia really, people are listening to each other and healing each other and healing ourselves as well and living in some kind of harmony....

Alistair clarified the value of the silence experienced at a Buddhist retreat: ‘...when you eat you only eat early on in the day ...you’re spending your whole time [for him seven days] between sitting meditation or walking meditation’. At the time of the interview he hoped to attend another similar but longer retreat in order to contemplate the next stage of his life.

Attending Quaker Quest events were mentioned by various interviewees but one, Ruth, specifically mentioned hearing at such events ‘...inspiring speakers and they have been very helpful...’.

6.3.4 Conferences, Woodbrooke⁴⁷, Claridge House⁴⁸

Four interviewees name attending these Centres as a source of spiritual nurture.

Ruth reported going to the Quaker Fellowship of Healing at Claridge House as being helpful.

Woodbrooke is particularly mentioned by three interviewees. Rachel spoke of how she first went to Woodbrooke two years previously looking for a space where she could talk about spiritual matters and reported: ‘...I found it very nice at Woodbrooke...I found that very supportive ... it’s a safe space in which people will say all sorts of things and you just feel that’s expected... you sit down at table with people and start telling them all sorts of things..’.

Esta described being at Woodbrooke as being ‘...a tremendous experience... having the opportunity to meet so many people and so many people from different Meetings when you go to a course at Woodbrooke ...there are people from different walks of life there for different reasons, it’s something about the atmosphere at Woodbrooke... it’s astonishing...’.

She continued:

I thought this [a particular course she was attending] could only happen at Woodbrooke.....it’s openness and support you get from everyone from the office staff, the people in the kitchen and again a sense of equality...a manager isn’t more important than the person in the kitchen, they all matter and they are all what makes

⁴⁷ Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre in Birmingham which organises a varied programme of courses and education opportunities based around Quaker interests and subjects. www.woodbrooke.org.uk

⁴⁸ Claridge House is the Quaker Centre for Healing, Rest and Renewal situated in the Surrey village of Dormansland. Courses are organised here together with retreats and accommodation is offered for anyone wanting space for rest and retreats. www.claridgehousequaker.org.uk

Woodbrooke work. And you can't impose that I don't think, it has to be integral to the beliefs and opinions.

Another interviewee who values her time Woodbrooke is Faith who explained: '...that time is set aside for looking at some particular aspect of spiritual life isn't it and so in that respect it is interesting, it is useful...'. Faith reported having attended varied conferences during her life's spiritual journey and generally feels spiritually fed by them.

6.3.5 Other groups

Two interviewees name three spiritual connections and experiences which do not belong elsewhere and come together under 'Groups' for no better reason than they were experienced whilst attending academic university courses.

The first interviewee reported experiencing connection to the spiritual whilst being with nature during a field trip when, in her own words, 'I felt the forest was communicating with me and telling me that I was part of it...it was a really powerful feeling...I didn't know what to make of it at the time but I just knew this as a very nice experience..'. She had come to realise, later in her life, this had been a spiritual experience and one which eventually led her to Quakerism.

The second interviewee named learning a performing skill as assisting their personal development and explained: 'Well it was a skill that I could learn that was interesting and it gave me the opportunity to do something which I wouldn't have been able to do otherwise...'

This interviewee, like the previous one, also sees wonder in nature and science commentating:

...when you talk to scientists and people who are really doing the stuff [research etc.] they get into religious thinking quite quickly, it's all so amazing and beyond our knowledge and always will be beyond our knowledge and the more we find out the more we realise we don't know and that'll always be the case, it's fascinating and wonderful.

This interviewee continued: 'I love science, it's fascinating and it's so beautiful as well and overwhelmingly wonderful as well as being the equally kind of particular practical things are interesting....'. This interviewee sees the spiritual as integral to life generally and clarified:

I'm absolutely clear it's [the spiritual] completely integral to my life. I don't feel it as a separate thing. I sometimes struggle to talk about my spiritual life just because it's completely.. it's all the same, it's every day, completely entwined with everything I do...I don't mind talking about God but I don't have a sense of a being, an external other, I don't find that a helpful language to talk about, it's about God in all sorts of other things, in love, in goodness, in thought, in how I am, how other people are, how we relate to each other, but it is more than the other language that we use, the more everyday language... I think it is useful to have those other words and language to try and talk about the beyond, the more than, than the everyday and it's important to keep exploring the language....

6.3.6. Discussion of Data of Spiritual Contacts via Groups.

There are forty spiritual nurture contacts named in this main category the second highest of the four main categories. This category also has the second highest average number of contacts per interviewee – 3.6. Females and male named more or less the same number, females an average of 3.9 contacts and males an average of 3. All interviewees name at least two sub-categories within this main category. This indicates that groups are important to all though to a lesser extent than individual people.

Both sexes name both set agenda⁴⁹, on-going⁵⁰ and residential groups⁵¹ more or less equally. Conferences are only mentioned by four women and no men. Other, which include skills-

⁴⁹ This averages out at 1 per female and 0.7 per male.

⁵⁰ This averages out at 1.38 per female and 1.3 per male.

⁵¹ This averages out at 0.6 per female and 0.3 per male.

types courses and group experiences are mentioned by one male twice and one female once both having said such courses developed them as people.

Overall, groups are important because they allow the interviewees to join with others to discuss spiritual matters as well as help individuals feel they belong and more attached to their Local Meeting.

Whilst a few value the content of groups, interviewees value the context, the joining with others listening, and being listened to, in an environment which allows people to get to know each other on a deeper more spiritual level.

6.4. COMMUNITY

This category includes anywhere where there are people living by common beliefs, interests and concerns so work and worshipping community are part of this category.

This category is divided into a further three sub-categories (see Figure 6.4):

- i) Local
- ii) National
- iii) International.

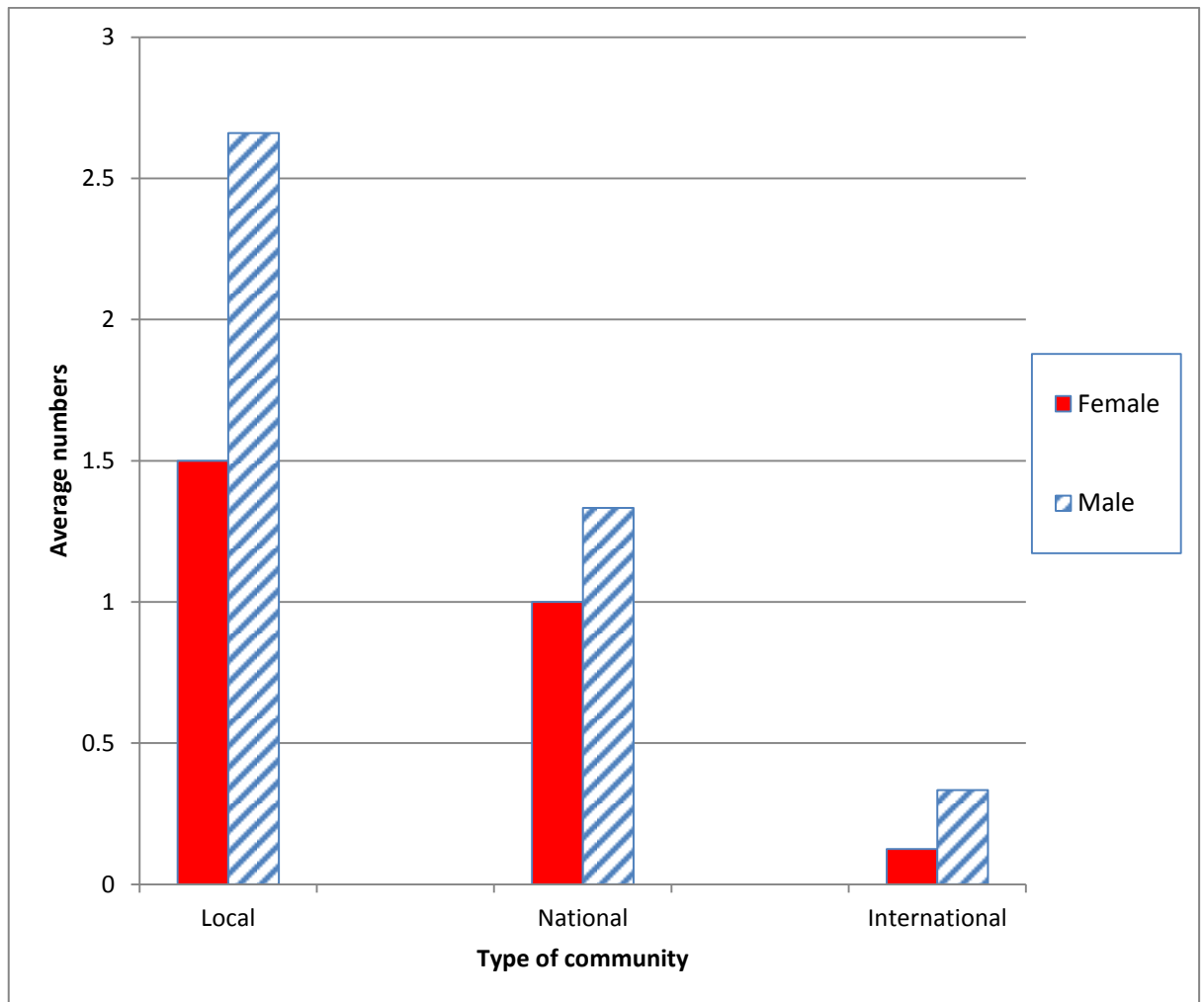


FIG. 6.4, **Spiritual contacts via community (average)**

6.4.1. Local community include worshipping and work related affinities.

Twenty spiritual contacts are named within this category by eight interviewees.

Alistair named five sources of nurture from local communities. He explained his early years being spent in an evangelical church where he became ‘...well versed in a lot of the parts of the Bible because it’s very rich as literature..’. He also cited Quaker Meetings for Worship being of influence remarking: ‘..I would use Meeting for Worship or Meeting for Business or something like that and listen to what was said’. However, work is where he appears to have

been able to put his Quaker principles to use and gain appreciation for this. As he explained: 'I remember one boss saying there was integrity in the way I approached things...'. On another occasion, Alistair explained: 'I've had colleagues who've said, it's the way you do the job ... I've always had a thing... one of the things I've found easy about the Quakers is speaking truth to power...'. He continued: 'I've had plenty of affirming...I'm likely to walk through the office not burdened by what's going on but more with the lightness and a smile'. I took this last reference by Alistair to refer to Quaker Advices and Queries⁵² No. 42 "Walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one".

Anne felt supported by her colleagues as well by attending work-related meetings and support groups in her area, she explained: '...it isn't spiritual in that there is no religious element at all but it has a spiritual element to how I feel supported by it... like when you go to Meeting for Worship ...'.

Another interviewee who had received personal support within the workplace is Ethyl who named two experiences of guidance over career development both of which nurtured and assisted her. Through her work Ethyl also met a man who had had a strong belief in heaven and she clarified: '....I thought he was wonderful, I was amazed...of course he died and that made a great influence upon me'. She continued '...I thought - fancy anybody believing in anything as strongly as that...he was so sure he was going somewhere lovely'. Ethyl felt here she had learnt a spiritual lesson.

Many of the interviewees named their local Quaker community as nurturing. On finding Quakers, Ethyl explained: 'I found the silence absolutely magical...'. Talking about being part of a Quaker community, Ruth remarked: '...what's nurtured me is all those small acts of

⁵² Found in *Quaker Faith and Practice* (1994:1.02)

kindness... observing people behaving in a good, spiritual way and that doesn't mean holy Jo's or whatever ... talking about God or anything like that but it could be a really small thing, a small thoughtful thing...'. Speaking about ministry, Ruth commented: '...even people at Meeting when they minister... I would imagine that that's a given that ministry at Meeting has helped...'. At one part of the interview, when asked 'What got you through?' referring to a bad patch in her life, Ruth replied: '...It was the underlying faith that the Meeting feeds...'.

Esta named Meeting for Worship as being 'really important for me' and continued: 'I'm there most weeks and there seems to be a sort of osmosis goes on and I feel you come out, usually nurtured...'.

Talking about Quaker worship and language, William clarified: 'One of the reasons I value Quaker worship and the community is because it isn't fixed, we don't have it that the language is too rigid and fixed that people are exploring and trying [to find out] what does it mean that's hugely important...'. He explained the importance of talking about things, 'I suppose I'm keen to continue these overt discussions about spiritual and normal life....I don't think that I or many of us talk about those things enough overtly... getting to know each other is what it's about... really talking and finding ways of sharing..'.

Jon also named Meeting for Worship as 'very important' explaining: '...Meeting for Worship is very special I mean it's not that anything magical or mystery... yes but something mysterious does sometimes happen... it's the sort of letting go into the stillness..'.

Brenda very much values her family life being enveloped within a Quaker community.

'We're lucky to both be able to go to Meeting and see that as an important part of our lives is deeply reinforcing for the other and in times where you just don't want to get out of bed then

that helps....it's really valuable and helpful to have a partnership that is both attending the same church in part of the same community...' and she continued '...I still feel seen as an individual'.

6.4.2. National community

Five interviewees mention a national community for twelve instances of spiritual nurture. All refer to the wider British Quaker community.

Two interviewees named Quaker special interest groups, one said: 'Being in a group and having fun together with a sort of spiritual basisit felt sort of strengthening....a very strong sense of belonging...'. The other interviewee named attendance at a Quaker summer school as a youth important, as was attending the Universalist group for a time, the latter gave both validation to this interviewee's thinking and '...it was shifting perspectives or widening the vision, it is about changing the way I saw things...'.

Esta had worked as a volunteer for a Quaker establishment and reading about the broader Quaker historical facts both made an impression and deepened her understanding of what it is to be a Quaker.

Attending Quaker summer schools had been of significance to another interviewee, William, leading him to further value the organisation. He explained:

..what we value is the individual experience and not the creeds and all of that but it has to be tested back with the organisation for me to be valuable and to be much more than just individual's thoughts...I guess that's what I value most out of Quakers as a religious organisation is not the history and what it says now but the other people

involved right now and the systems that we work together with, how we look at issues and learn....

William also named the workings of British Yearly Meeting⁵³ :

I mean being at Yearly Meeting Gathering the previous one where the same sex marriage process went through⁵⁴ was just fantastic, the final decision's great but the whole process was just fantastic and being part of that and where you know the corporate body went further and faster than any of the individuals, which was really interesting to feel and be part of that and I was taken along by...

For William the process is important, he reported: '...that process going on which happens more obviously at the big Gatherings when there are lots of people....it's happening at every Meeting'.

Brenda has been part of various National Quaker groups during her life and noted they had offered her '...a wonderful opportunity to explore and a real engagement...'. What had been important to her, especially when young, was: 'I was seen as an individual'. She had also worked within the Quaker establishment and saw working '...with an overt Quaker practice in our decision making and in our relationships...' as '...definitely part of my spiritual journey'.

6.4.3 International Community

Two interviewees mention the influence on their lives of international contacts.

One had lived among another culture for a good amount of time and recalled: '..I think it [sharing another culture] transformed my view of the world...I was actually living in a community of people which I'd never done before... normally you just live in four walls and

⁵³ British Yearly Meeting in session is the final constitutional authority of the Religious Society of Friends. (QF&P 6.09)

⁵⁴ Referring to British Yearly Meeting held in York July 2009

you know a few people around..’. This interviewee reported feeling truly seen and known and during this time ‘...you always feel you’re being sort of watched over.. so I think it expands your spirit and makes you feel you’re part of something bigger, you’re not just shut inside your own skin..’.

The other interviewee reported attending a large Quaker convention abroad recalling it as being: ‘...enjoyable, not particularly challenging, fascinating and a huge learning experience...’. This interviewee reported having made important friendships there with other Quakers, some of which continue to this day.

6.4.4. Discussion of Data of Spiritual Contacts via Community

Thirty-four spiritual nurture contacts are named in this category⁵⁵. All but one interviewee name spiritual nurture in this category. In this category alone male contacts are higher in number than female. I look at this further below.

The majority of contacts are made within the local community⁵⁶. Three interviewees gain nurture from work related contacts where they have received assistance with their personal development, support and recognition for who they are. The others have found their local Quaker community nurturing whether it be the silence, observing people behaving in a spiritual way or ministry which have spoken to them.

⁵⁵ This averages out at 3.1 per interviewee : 2.6 per female and 4.3 per male.

⁵⁶ This averages out at 1.5 per female and 2.7 per male.

National community contacts are mentioned by five interviewees⁵⁷. All are referring to national Quaker groups.

International community contacts are mentioned by two interviewees⁵⁸ all gaining nourishment from travelling abroad and experiencing other cultures.

As mentioned above, the most noticeable point from this category is that men had more average contacts than women. Perhaps this points to men preferring communal, less personal contact to more intense, personal contact.

The corporate natures of the Quaker communities, both local and national, are important to all interviewees. A high proportion of interviewees gain nurture from these events and value being part of the process.

6.5 MEDIA

The media category is sub-divided into four sub-categories (see Figure 6.5):

- i) books
- ii) Broadcast including TV, theatre, films
- iii) Art, poetry, music
- iv) Other

⁵⁷ This averages out at 1 per female and 1.3 per male.

⁵⁸ This averages out at 0.1 per female and 0.3 per male.

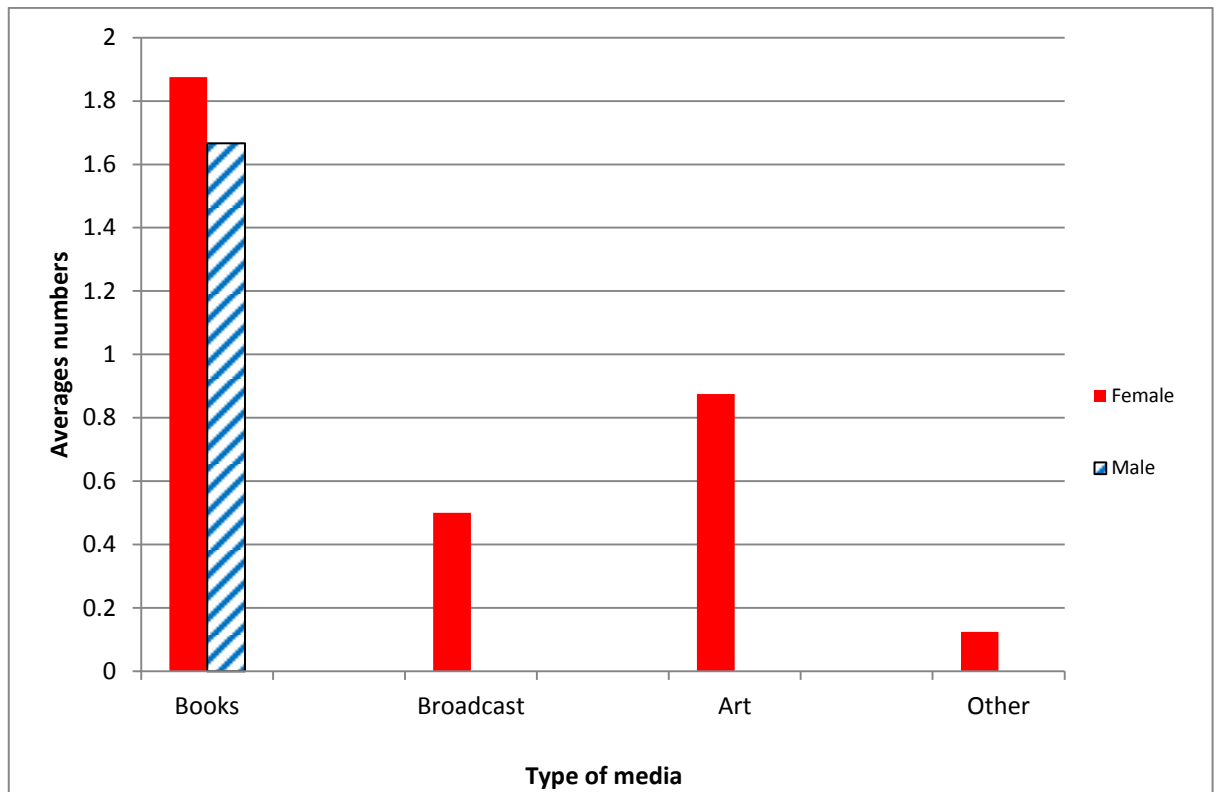


FIG. 6.5. **Spiritual contacts via media (average)**

6.5.1 Books

Seven interviewees mention books as being of influence naming between them twenty contacts. For these seven, it can be seen that books are the most important within this category for their spiritual nourishment.

Books appear to be most important to Faith, Anne and Ruth. Faith reported:

...when thinking about this further, books are a huge area....Certainly I have probably the big area for books that I have homed in on are books written about spirituality, about aspects of belief, about issues with particular religions, numerous books out there on, for example, what was the real meaning and purpose of Jesus' life and death, books is what I have turned to to answer that questions apart from occasionally have discussions with people, books is a whole area.....

She particularly mentioned the books of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.

Books are one of the signposts which lead Anne along her spiritual journey. She named both spiritual texts and self-help books. She relies particularly on one workbook to assist her at difficult times when ‘bad inner stuff’ is around, she reported saying to herself ‘Anne stop, remember do a workbook lesson’ and knows this would be helpful.

Ruth relies on books for support too. She explained: ‘...when you pick up *Quaker Faith and Practice* and you read some of the things there, they put things that I’ve...I know what you are talking about you say it so much better than I could ever say it’. Talking about self-help books she clarified: ‘I’ve found those have always been helpful from an emotional point of view, not just the Quaker ones...’. She commented, ‘I always try to have a spiritual book on the go...’.

Brenda in the past read Thomas Merton and had explored thoroughly George Fox’s Journal explaining: ‘...I explored George Fox’s Journal fairly heavily. I don’t think I’ve got one Quaker writer that I would say that person really spoke my mind, it’s a collection as it so often is of these things... there isn’t one Quaker voice that I read that I think would have been hugely influential...’.

Reading other people’s views is mentioned by Alistair who explained how a book can nourish him and confirm his experience. For Alistair ideals and standards to aim for are also important. He values written working practices and codes of practice at his work and:

...I probably use [Quaker] *Faith and Practice* in terms of...ok this is tough and we are going to do the best we can but work out where you are falling short and try and get it a bit better the next time perhaps...I’m using the book to give myself a concept... in the same way I would use a Meeting for Worship or Meeting for Business or something like that and listen to what was said but I think in terms of the idea of who I would turn to I think it’s me and God whatever that means I think that’s how I trying to work it would be.

William, when talking about support, said: ‘clearly the historical thinking and writing is also great... you know *Quaker Faith and Practice*, the stuff in there is fantastic what it says...’.

Marigold reported that a style of Jewish women’s writings had been helpful at one time in her life.

6.5.2. Broadcast/film/theatre

Faith explained: ‘...the spiritual for me is how we treat each other, because certainly which have had an impact on me have been things that people have said or done and it may not necessarily be when I am actually in their presence; it could be things which I have seen on the television for example..’. Connections for Faith are made ‘...via television or in a book or a recording or something it doesn’t have to be actual face to face...’.

6.5.3 Art/music/poetry

Four female interviewees mentioned spiritual connection via the arts.

When asked what gets you through [difficult times] Ruth reported that she might: ‘listen to some music’. Anne too, when asked about her spiritual sustenance and support replied: ‘Depends what you call spiritual... if you feel you generally get excited about something you might see certain works of art, or listen to certain pieces of music, that kind of thing...’.

Talking about the idea of soul, Marigold explained: ‘...I like the idea of soul being in particular poems or songs or writings that move me, they feel soulful, they have soul....’.

When talking about her connection with the spiritual, Brenda described listening to music as a doorway into that place. She explained: ‘Yes, listening to music would be one of the doorways or the keys... I don’t think music creates that sense but I think it offers you a way to connect’. She continued: ‘...listening to music is one thing, the beautiful ethereal choir which I’m perhaps, unusually for a Quaker, appreciative of; but also making music with other people, singing I love and I think that’s another access point’.

6.5.4. Other

It is worth including how one interviewee explained how they reconnect with the spiritual as follows: ‘I might do something like go for a run...’.

6.5.5. Discussion of Spiritual Contacts via Media.

This category represents spiritual nurture gained from indirect contact with people via books, film, poetry etc. Seven out of the eleven interviewees name this category.⁵⁹

I am surprised how many of the interviewees name books as giving nourishment. This may add to the tendency for self-direction found among Quakers discussed in the final chapter.

Media contacts have two tendencies, the first to assist in opening up the spiritual aspect of the self and the second as instructional. It is probably relevant that recorded and written material is consistent - it is always there on the shelf to reach for when needing inspiration, support and/or assistance.

⁵⁹ There are a total number of 32 contacts averaging 2.9 per interviewee : 3.4 per female and 1.7 per male.

6.6. Chapter Summary

I expected for there to be noticeable differences between where men and women access spiritual nurture but the data does not support this. Among the ‘spiritual contacts with individuals’ category, women name far more influences from living role models but men name more influences from other types of individuals including family. This has led me to conclude there was no advantage in concentrating on differences between the sexes in this study.

The ways interviewees find spiritual nurture is varied. Each interviewee has their own individual needs and ways of fulfilling these. All interviewees consider themselves on a journey and see their spiritual development as an on-going process. Two interviewees have experienced traditional spiritual direction relationships and three others value psychotherapeutic relationships but in the main interviewees select their own form of spiritual guidance from a variety of sources.

Given the diversity of spiritual nurture found and their sources, I summarise the findings by again using Margaret Guenther’s three aspects of spiritual direction : hospitality, teacher and midwife. (See Table 6.2.)

Hospitality:

The hospitality aspect is found within all major categories whether Buddhist, Christian or Quaker in origin. This can be within specialist groups such as retreats, training courses as well as religious and political special interest groups. The local worshiping community is of value especially the smaller groups operating within the Quaker community.

Hospitality is experienced within families and friendship circles as well as from spiritual accompaniers and counsellors/psychotherapists.

Quaker hospitality seems to be particularly experienced and valued in Quaker-run concerns such as Woodbrooke and within the Quaker establishment where the workings of the Quaker ethos is experienced in actuality.

Teacher:

The majority of the teacher genre is found within the 'individual people and group' categories. Some interviewees use role models and examples, both historical and modern, including 'weighty Friends', family members and Ffriends⁶⁰ to influence and illustrate how how to be and live a Quaker life.

Influence and nurture by ordinary fellow Quakers is a common experience whether through ministry during a Meeting for Worship, encouragement to attend an event or being part of a group where everyone is valued and listened to. As mentioned before, small discussion groups are particularly valued by most interviewees offering them a sense of belonging, validation and inclusion.

⁶⁰ Ffriends is a colloquial term sometimes used when referring to a person who is both a friend and a Quaker.

Ordinary people and situations met along the way is another source of nurture whether met through work, in the home or out in the world and whether through a recognition of an interviewee's quality of being or experiencing oneness with the world through nature.

Interviewees also mention actual teachers, both from their youth and later, who have nurtured their spiritual and personal development through encouragement, their concern or general demeanour.

Midwife:

Like the two other aspects of Guenther's definition, midwifery can be found throughout all categories of spiritual nurture contacts. Among individual people, midwife-nurturers are found in group, work, and family settings. Actual teachers are mentioned a few times having shown to one interviewee a particular interest in his development and shown to another clear boundaries which had enabled her to flourish educationally.

Group environments are named as a nurturing experience for most interviewees where they report feeling supported and encouraged to be themselves. It is in a group setting one interviewee developed a performing skill thus enabling their personal and therefore spiritual development. The importance of clear boundaries in a group setting to create a safe space is named by two interviewees.

Work offers the midwife experience to a few whether it be a boss affirming his way of being, a boss's encouragement to pursue a particular avenue or taking part in a corporate Quaker event where a decision comes about through waiting and patience.

The arts also offer a few interviewees support and sustenance, whether it be listening or creating music or experiencing the soul respond through poetry.

TABLE 6.2 : TABLE OF GUENTHER'S ASPECTS OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION
FOUND (✓) OR NOT (X) AMONG MODERN QUAKERS

HOSPITALITY	Found or not
Listening	✓
Offer love	✓
Respect	✓
Opening self to another : allows self to be touched	✓
Holding hope	✓
Caring	✓
Acceptance	✓
Seeing Christ in the other	✓
Offering safe space and time	✓
Help other tell their story	✓
TEACHER	Found or not
Questioning	✓
Discernment	✓
Perception	✓
Self-knowledge	✓
Self-acceptance	✓
Self awareness	✓
Show by example how to live	✓
A lover of souls	✓
Listen to directees truest voice	✓
Hold belief in the other	✓
Share self with the other	✓
Encourage	✓
Be realistic	✓
Play	✓
Is hopeful for the other	✓
MIDWIFE	Found or not
Ministry of presence, patience and waiting	✓
Assist in spiritual birthgiving of other	✓
Ordinary person who helps others	✓
Helps towards great self- knowledge of other	✓
Helps other feel comfortable & free to be themselves	✓
Assists with natural event	✓
Is present – is there with the other	✓
Knows how and when to confront	✓
Able to wait and be with uncertainty	✓
Knows spiritual rhythms	✓
Can feel what's happening	✓
Encouraging	✓
Non-intervention – allowing	✓
Celebration at birth	X
Comforting and supportive	✓
Allows vulnerability	✓
Has humility	✓

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This study looks at spiritual direction among early Quakers and among a group of twenty-first century Quakers. Early Quakers had a distinct, close knit community which included spiritual direction. The research also finds modern Quakers to be mindful of their spiritual nurture and development accessing these from a wide variety of sources within and without the Quaker community.

I find there to be a distinct style of Quaker spiritual direction which I describe as ‘self-direction’, this being a dyadic relationship between self and the Holy Spirit as opposed to the traditional Christian spiritual direction triadic relationship – director, directee and the Holy Spirit (Harborne 2012:6).

7.1. Thesis Findings

7.1.1. Early Quakers

Among early Quakers I find much evidence of assorted styles of spiritual direction.

Fell, during the early days of Quakerism, had family responsibilities and so was less able to travel round the country therefore gave her spiritual nurture and guidance via correspondence

with Quakers both to those travelling and spreading the ‘word’ and to those suffering imprisonment for their beliefs. She is described by Braithwaite as ‘a tender nursing mother unto many’. (1923:134)

Grundy, writing about early Quaker teaching methods, claims: ‘It was always clear that new Friends, as well as more experienced ones, were to be taken to the feet of Christ and left there to learn from the Teacher himself’. (2007:51) Here I take Grundy to be referring to unconvinced⁶¹ and convinced⁶² Friends. I do not agree with Grundy here as I found evidence to the contrary. For instance, Penington has on-going spiritual nurturing correspondence with a number of ‘unconvinced Quakers’ who were struggling with spiritual issues, examples are Widow Hemmings (Pennington 1996:441-6:469-70), Catherine Portage (1996:470) and an unknown correspondent (1996:508-509).

I also found evidence of Fell welcoming at least three young women, unconvinced Quakers, into her home who were sent to her for spiritual nurture and guidance (Ross 1949:38; Barbour & Roberts 2004:471-2). These examples show evidence of direct support and guidance to the unconvinced.

To convinced Quakers such as Thomas Ellwood, Penington and his wife Mary clearly gave hospitality and support to individuals as illustrated by Ellwood referring to them ‘as affectionate parents’ (Ellwood 1885:77). Grundy makes a further assertion:

⁶¹ A term used in the early days of Quakerism to indicate someone who had not taken up the Quaker mode of dress, speech etc. (Bauman 1998:51)

⁶² A term used in the early days of Quakerism to indicate someone who took up plain clothes, speaking, etc. so clearly showing they were convinced – guilty of their previous life and leading a new life on the Quaker path. (Bauman 1998:51)

Therefore, references to indoctrination, or what might be called religious education or spiritual direction, are sparse or even non-existent in seventeenth-century Quaker journals. On the other hand, references to spiritual friendships, what we might understand as mentoring and nurture abound. (2007:53)

I agree with the second sentence of this assertion. Both Penington and Fell offered consistent hospitality and respite to fellow Quakers in their respective homes. On the first part of her assertion I argue again with Grundy in the light that spiritual direction has changed and is no longer about indoctrination and imposing religious belief on others as she infers. Today direction is more about listening to the Holy Spirit with another person (more is said about this below).

Early Quaker spiritual direction can be found in the hospitality to non-Quaker girls by Fell and in Penington's letters to women not yet convinced as Quakers as well as in the on-going support and nurture amongst convinced Quakers of the time. I therefore hold that spiritual direction was far from 'sparse or even non-existent in the seventeenth-century Quaker journals' as Grundy claims.

7.1.2 Modern Quakers

Like the early Quakers, my findings show a group of present-day Quakers mindful of their spiritual life and who are nomadic and self-directed.

I find twenty-first century Quakers to be 'nomadic' (Knox 2009: 255) in their search for spiritual nourishment. Spiritual nourishment is found within the Quaker community as well as

outside. Similar to the theorising of Heelas and Woodhead (2005), I found modern Quakers seeking spiritual nourishment from within the holistic milieu – Buddhist groups, counselling and psychotherapy, healing groups, Women’s Spiritual and/or Peace groups, art, (2005:156) and also from nature, science and books.

Unlike the traditional Christian spiritual director/directee relationship, the interviewees do not depend upon a one-to-one director/directee relationship to guide their spiritual life but depend on their own individual relationship with their ‘inner voice’ as described by Gillman when explaining silent worship ‘In the quiet, they [Quakers] maintain, the still, small voice can speak to them and direct their lives’ (1988:8). I call this style of spiritual direction ‘self-direction’.

Self-direction appears to be similar to ‘sacro-egoism’ one of four forms of spiritual authority named by Knox (2009). Knox explains:

Sacro-Egoism refers to the situation in which the self or ego has the highest sacred authority in a person’s life, giving direction and meaning to religious and spiritual activities (or non-participation). God and religion are seen more as ‘helpers’ to individual spiritual fulfilment in life. (2009:38)

I am struck by the similarities between Guenther’s overarching description of a spiritual director as ‘a holy listener’ (1992:147) and the Quaker emphasis on listening to the inner voice. Harborne describes the spiritual direction relationship as ‘triadic’ (2012:6) – director, directee and the Holy Spirit. I would describe the Quaker spiritual direction relationship as a dyadic one – Quaker and Holy Spirit. In both cases listening is central. When there is a director/directee relationship both are listening for the Holy Spirit, as Guenther comments:

‘More than host, teacher or midwife, as a spiritual director I am a holy listener’ (1992:147).
A Quaker is her own holy listener.

The importance of small groups organised by Local Meetings is highlighted in the interview analysis. All interviewees value small groups because:

- groups help individuals feel they belong more to their Local Meeting;
- groups enable individuals to get to know each other better;
- groups offer the opportunity for spiritual debate.

The variety of small groups mentioned during the interviews includes discussion, study and general task-focused groups.

Finally and importantly, these Quakers are both nurtured and nurturers. In the interviews I included the question ‘Have you ever found yourself giving someone what you would consider to be spiritual nurture?’ to find out how many interviewees see themselves as nurturing others. All interviewees reply in the affirmative. This finding affirms one of the basic teaching of Quakerism set out in 11.01 of their Book of Discipline.⁶³ This illustrates that all participants are mindful of the spiritual nurture and needs of others within their Quaker community and act as clergy at times as well as laity.

⁶³ *Quaker Faith and Practice* ‘When early Friends affirmed the priesthood of all believers it was seen as an abolition of the clergy; in fact it is an abolition of the laity.’ (1994:11.01)

7.2 Future Research

Three areas of future research appear significant.

The first to explore is the nature of Quaker spiritual direction; is it 'sacro-egoist'⁶⁴ or 'sacro-theist'⁶⁵? How do we tell the difference? In other words where does the authority of Quaker spiritual nurture originate - from the ego/self or from God/spirit. This exploration could happen within experiential group learning activities.

The second and third areas are linked and relate to the support and nurture of the spiritual nurturers within the British Quaker community in contrast to what is available within traditional spiritual direction circles.

Traditional Christian spiritual direction as found in the Church of England for example, is available from clergy and/or spiritual directors operating within a standardized support structure. This traditional structure offers training, supervision and general support and on-going development for its spiritual nurturers.

Unlike the Church of England, with its professional and dedicated clergy and spiritual directors, Quakerism is a flat church with no distinction between laity and clergy; it is also a volunteer church with no paid employees at Local Meeting level. I believe these facts potentially leave the spiritual life and its development of individual Quakers vulnerable.

⁶⁴ 'Sacro-Egoism' : where the ultimate spiritual authority is with the individual. (Knox 2008:168)

⁶⁵ 'Sacro-Theism': where the primary authority is given to direct revelation/calling(s) from God in an individual's life. (Knox 2008:168)

Therefore, the second area for future research would be to identify the various forms of spiritual nurture in existence within the British Quaker community together with their effectiveness. How do both Members and Attenders learn more about and develop their spirituality? It feels to me Quakers are very much left to their own devices and reliant on what individual Area Meetings and Local Meetings offer in the way of spiritual nurture. The Area Meeting I chose to interview offers good opportunities for spiritual nurture but, this is the case for all areas?

Linked to two, the third area for research would be to explore if anything is to be learnt from a traditional Christian spiritual direction network as found, for example, within the Church of England? How can the Quaker community of Britain better support its membership in the art and skill of holy listening?

7.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the nature of spiritual direction in early and modern Quakers as ‘self-directed’ and highlighted three directions for possible future research.

APPENDIX A Page 1/2The Questions

All interviewees were asked the same range of questions though not necessarily in the same order. The questions were as follows:

1. Tell me about yourself, how long have you been going to Quaker Meeting, age, and other details you may wish to share.
2. I wonder if you can tell me what made you respond to this project?
3. How would you describe your relationship with the God/spiritual aspect of yourself?
4. Tell me about your spiritual journey and particularly in respect of the kinds of assistance you have found on the way.
 Probes: Would spiritual accompaniment be a better term?
 Would you regard that as having the essence of spiritual direction?
 Tell me more about when....
 What kind of conversations were those?
 Was there ever a time when you needed to turn to someone? Did you talk to someone at that time?
5. If you had a spiritual crises now who would you turn to?⁶⁶
6. Have you ever found yourself giving to someone what you would consider to be spiritual nurture?
7. Is there anything else you would like to share?

The interviewee was left to define their own understanding of key words within the questions, so for example what each individual interviewee understood to be spiritual nurture was left for them to decide, as were the words spiritual, relationship, crises, etc.

The questions were designed to elicit particular information from the interviewees. Questions one, two and three were questions, also named as 'sensitizing questions' by Strauss and Corbin (1998:77) were designed to gather basic information from the interviewees such as their personal details and language they tend to use around spiritual issues. Question four was the key question, described by Strauss and Corbin as the 'theoretical question' (1998:77) designed to '...help the researcher to see process, variation and the like and to make connections among concepts' (1998:77). Attached to this key question are probes as explained in the methodology chapter.

Question five, asking about who the interviewee would go to in a spiritual crises is an attempt to gather theoretical data using imaginative and 'what if' thinking to deepen or widen the exploration.

⁶⁶ During the analysis stage I decided to disregard the responses to this question as, unlike all other questions, it was a 'what if' question rather than an actuality based question as all other questions were.

Appendix A : The Questions page 2/2

Question six, another theoretical style question, was to explore whether the interviewees considered they gave spiritual nurture to others in addition to receiving it. The purpose of this question was to explore whether any interviewees saw themselves more as givers of spiritual nurture than receivers.

Question seven was asked to give the opportunity for the interviewee to say anything left unsaid.

APPENDIX B – page 1/2

INFORMATION SHEET FOR VOLUNTEER INTERVIEWEES FOR 'QUAKERS AND SPIRITUAL DIRECTION' RESEARCH PROJECT

ABOUT THE RESEARCH PROJECT

This research is for a M. Phil. in Quaker Studies at Woodbrooke in association with the University of Birmingham. The research project consists of historical research which is book based and data gained from interviews with a group of modern day Quakers.

ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

Elisabeth Sutherland is the research student and lives in Leicester and is a Member of Leicester Quaker Meeting. She is now retired and trained as a spiritual director after working for twenty years as a counsellor and psychotherapist.

WHAT WOULD BE REQUIRED OF ME?

To have a preliminary telephone conversation with Elisabeth and, if we both agree to proceed to an interview, to be interviewed by Elisabeth for between 1 – 2 hours. The interview will be recorded to be used in her analysis of who modern day Quakers go to for spiritual nurture.

You will be required to sign a consent form and you have the right to withdraw at any stage.

You will be asked to choose an alias name for the interview so it will not be possible for you to be identified by anyone other than Elisabeth.

WHERE WILL THE INTERVIEW TAKE PLACE?

The interview will take place in a place where we would not be disturbed for an hour or so and which you find comfortable. This could be a Local Meeting House or in your home. This would be talked about during the initial telephone conversation.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN AT THE INTERVIEW?

After a little time settling and getting prepared, Elisabeth will switch on a small voice recorder and begin by asking you an opening question. Basically you will be asked to talk about your spiritual journey and who, along the way, has helped or assisted you and who you go to or would go to for spiritual nurture.

APPENDIX B - page 2/2

WHAT WILL HAPPEN AFTER THE INTERVIEW?

The recording will be kept as an anonymous computer file and transcribed and used for the research and any related publications.

When the research is written up you will receive, if you wish, an electronic copy of the research dissertation and/or it will be available in the Woodbrooke Library.

Researcher contact details: Elisabeth Sutherland, Tel. No.xxxxxxxx
e-mail: xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Academic supervisor contact details:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM FOR M.Phil. RESEARCH PROJECT 'QUAKERS AND SPIRITUAL DIRECTION'

I have read and understood the project information sheet

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project

I agree to take part in the project. Taking part in the project will include being interviewed and recorded on a voice recorder

I understand that my taking part is voluntary. I can withdraw from the study at any time and I do not have to give any reasons for why I have withdrawn. Should I withdraw all data relating to me will be destroyed.

I understand my personal details such as phone no. and address will not be revealed to people outside the project

I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, and other research outputs – any quotes used will be anonymised.

I understand that I can choose a name to be known by in this research

I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any material related to this project to Elisabeth Sutherland

_____	_____	_____
Name of participant	Signature	Date

_____	_____	_____
Researcher	Signature	Date

ARTICLE FOR AREA MEETING NEWSLETTER

WHO DO QUAKERS GO TO FOR SPIRITUAL NURTURE?

My name is Elisabeth (Lis) Sutherland and I am currently studying for a M.Phil. at Woodbrooke/University of Birmingham. I am looking for volunteers to take part in research I am doing for my dissertation which is entitled 'Quakers and Spiritual Direction'. I am hoping you may help me by volunteering. First I will tell you a little about myself and then go on to explain what participation in the research will mean.

About me

Up to October 2009 I was a Member of your AM, I took up membership of Quakers at xxxxxx LM and later joined xxxxxx LM. In 2009 I retired and moved to Leicester and am now a Member of Leicester Area Meeting and go the Leicester LM.

Before my retirement I worked as a counsellor and psychotherapist in private practice in xxx. Knowing my years in this work were numbered I took part in a two-year training in spiritual direction with the London Diocese at the Church of St.Edmund the King in Lombard Street.

Retirement, however, proved too quiet for me and I found I needed challenge once again. A subject which has interested me for some years now is the relationship between Quakers and spiritual direction. Finding support along my spiritual path has been very important to me in my life so far and, what is often called spiritual direction, has come to me in various guises and with assorted people. Sometimes I have been lucky to have a friend who has been able to listen and perhaps offer suggestions and generally be there for me, at other times I have found a therapist who could appreciate my spiritual needs, and for twelve years of my life I was lucky to 'work' with a Zen Roshi whose guidance and support greatly changed and enhanced the quality of my life.

About the dissertation and research

The first section of my dissertation will be looking at the roots of spiritual direction and defining the practice before going on to search for evidence of spiritual direction/nurture among founder Quakers particularly looking at the writings of Margaret Fell and Isaac Pennington. Both these sections will be book based research.

The third section will be interviewing modern day Quakers to find out who they have gone to and go to for spiritual nurture, who they speak to about their innermost feelings and thoughts, who do they feel has in the past and who now hears their soul when it needs to be listened to. Who are the spiritual companions or spiritual accompanier of modern day Quakers?

I am looking for ten volunteers, women and men, for this third section of my dissertation. Participation will involve a telephone conversation with me to discuss practicalities and answer any queries and questions you may have. If we both agree to go ahead to the interview stage then I will arrange to visit you, probably in your own home or some other convenient place where we can be

APPENDIX D – page 2/2

uninterrupted for the duration of the interview. There will be a consent form for you to read and to be signed by both of us. You will also be asked for the name you would like to be referred to both in the interview and, if what you say is quoted, in the research. The reason for this is to keep you and what you say anonymous and ensure confidentiality.

The interview will take between 1 and 2 hours and it will be recorded. I will also take brief notes during the interview.

After the interview I will go away and study your interview and together with the other interviews analyses them in order to come up with an answer to ‘who do a group of modern day Quakers go to for spiritual nurture?’

I need to highlight here that you will have the right to withdraw your consent at any time. You will also be welcome to a digital copy of our interview and an electronic copy of my dissertation, when it is completed, if you so wish.

If you are interested in taking part in this innovative research project please contact me by e-mail on xxxxxxxxxxxx or ring me on xxxxxxxxxxxxxx.

I look forward to hearing from you.

APPENDIX E – page 1/8

EXTRACT FROM PAGES 6-9 OF TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH ESTA (ALL IDENTIFYING CONTENT HAS BEEN ALTERED)

Key: L = interviewer Es = interviewee

(Prior to this extract we had been talking about the actions of an individual in her Quaker Meeting)

L: So that really spoke.... did it touch you.

Es: It touched me greatly first of all um... for the honesty again and to me that's the essence of faith or belief ok it's not working for me now but it has worked.. I know it's there.. it's like you know having a friend that you've lost touch with and you don't know if you will ever be able to make that connection again but it doesn't matter, it was when she said 'it doesn't matter' you could sort of feel everyone going aherrr (taking a large in breathe) goodness you know and she's an Overseer, it's not what you would expect an Overseer to say.

L: In other churches it wouldn't....

Es: I can't imagine it being so easily accepted...

And there are lots of other people who just by ... CF for instance... and it's often at the point where they have had a lot of difficulties and... you see how they handle them.

L: They are examples?

Es: They are examples, they are patterns and examples and I've never so far had a sense of why is this happening to me, they might have the odd grumble but it is acceptance, it is acceptance.

L: I'm just picking out...

Es: Yes it gives you something to string it altogether.
(SILENCE)

L: Right just to turn back a little bit to the groups I'd be interested to hear.. so are they the two groups that you went to?

Es: Yes they are the only two groups that I really um... yes ... have been involved with and I think possibly quite a few of the same Friends were in the same groups and perhaps I say what I say about one is really the other but it doesn't really make a huge difference no....

L: So in the group, you were saying it wasn't actually the worksheets...

APPENDIX E – page 2/8

Es: It wasn't the worksheets...

L: It was what the other people said or....

Es: It was what they said, how open they were prepared to be and how often they would say – that's something I don't feel I can answer at the moment... having given it quite a bit of thought and there was never any sense of you failing on something, if you can't find an answer it means at the moment that answer is not within your experience...

L: So it's ok..

Es: Yes it's ok.. and I do recognise that the groups are... were useful because you need some kind of structure, some kind of sorting point and in both cases whoever was facilitating the groups I think XX might have been involved in one of them at various points they said.. actually I don't think this is the best way of doing it - how about if we try something else.. and you so often hear of other churches and groups and programmes... this rigid sticking to what the programme is, I know there is something called the Alpha course in the Anglicans and I haven't tried it so I can't criticise it... my impression is that the scripts if you like are adhered to pretty strictly and within all of these groups there was a feeling of - if it's needed, if it was going to be creative then you needed to be led by the Spirit if you like... and follow what was happening and so within those groups of people, and I think within both groups inevitably, not everyone who started was able to finish for a variety of reasons, but there were valuable experiences because you don't normally get the chance to talk about the things that are eternal in the course of Meeting for Worship and all of these occasions so you do, they are valuable you do need opportunities and I imagine this is what is happening with this Becoming Friends group and is another such opportunity for other people to explore these things.

L: Do you remember, did you feel listened to in these groups? (OH YES) So that's part of it....

Es: Very much so that was it and I think especially in the first group when I was still an Attender at both groups but the second one I had had more experience of Friends so I was probably a bit more confident... in the first one what was clear from the beginning it made absolutely no difference that I wasn't a more, an older Friend, a more weighty Friend, everyone was listened to equally and perhaps again what's coming out of that is that the sense is the testimony to equality, you know, everyone is worth listening to.

L: So the testimonies are important to you?

Es: They seem to emerge in the practice don't they, I mean Faith and Practice is about the practice.

L: Yes so what I'm hearing is, and I may be wrong here, what I'm hearing is you see equality in action and then you read it in the testimonies, they link up...

Es: They link up and they feed each other...

APPENDIX E – page 3/8

L: And there was another one.... of yes... in the groups you saw people changing things and being if you like feeling for the spirit...

Es: Yes and living adventurously, taking those risks... and probably the idea of truth and truth itself isn't immovable what is your truth at one point in your journey may be changed during the journey...
(SILENCE)

L: And did, did the groups help you in your relationship with the Meeting or not?

Es: Yes.. I feel they did.

L: In what way?

Es: Especially in the early days, I felt more accepted not that there had ever been a hint of not being accepted but I could, you sort of think, perhaps people are just being pleasant and they think - oh you know, I don't think she'll stay the course or I don't think she'll come to Meeting for very long - I understood there was no interest in that, if you like they weren't interested how long I was going to stay, that I was there at that point in time and that was all that mattered. And er... expanding on that to wider groups going to Woodbrooke has been a tremendous experience, oh... huge...

L: In what way?

E: Again meeting other Quakers because I'm not very good at going to different Meetings, I tend to trot down to the Local Meeting, so having the opportunity to meet so many people and so many people from different Meetings when you go to a course at Woodbrooke, and I've always been on courses, the people on the course um... everyone in Woodbrooke who happens to be there and they aren't necessarily always Quakers, there are people from different walks of life there for different reasons, it's something about the atmosphere at Woodbrooke .. um ..you just, I don't know it's astonishing and I got to know someone at my yoga class and she, her background is um... brought up as a RC and then an evangelical Christian for a number of years and she always describes herself as a Christian which is not how I would describe myself, but I was talking about going to a course at Woodbrooke and she practices yoga and she said I'd like to come but I don't know if I would fit in or feel comfortable, and I assured her she would and she came along to that and she has just been bowled over by Woodbrooke to the point that she now goes to about four courses, she last year and this year she's doing one that goes on in that funny period between Christmas and New Year, so she's been to that, we've been to - oh I think two other courses

(GENERAL TALK ABOUT COURSES OMITTED AS THEY COULD IDENTIFY INTERVIEWEE)

....it's [Woodbrooke] openness and support you get from everyone from the office staff, the people in the kitchen and again a sense of equality, you know.. a manager isn't more important than the person in the kitchen, they all matter and they are all what makes Woodbrooke work. And you can't impose that I don't think, it has to be integral to the beliefs and opinions.

APPENDIX E – page 4/8

L: It's almost like Quaker in action isn't it.

Es: It is and if you... the biggest publicist for Woodbrooke is my friend, she just says she's never encountered anything like it and she on her spiritual journey has been down many paths and the wonderful thing is that she doesn't feel that she needs to become a Quaker, you know, that's nothing to do with it, she comes along, she participates in the spirit of Quakers, in the spirit of Woodbrooke... she values it yes and she evangelises it (LAUGHTER) so the experience of being at Woodbrooke and of course when you are at Woodbrooke you're aware of the history and why Woodbrooke is there and everything about it and the other experience for me.....,

APPENDIX E – page 5/8

EXTRACT FROM PAGES 2 – 6 OF TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH RUTH
(ALL IDENTIFYING CONTENT HAS BEEN ALTERED)

KEY: L = interviewer
R = interviewee

L: So how would you describe your relationship with God?

R: Well I think... my relationship.... it's something that I try to understand but ... and it's something I sense and feel.... as much.. rather than know.. if that makes any sense... I also feel it is something in me as much as it pervades life and I've got life in me so it's pervasive... is pervasive the right word ... it's there and it's something that so.... my relationship... it's something within me and within other people... it's something I try to seek out.. and ... but also nurture but it also that guides me... I don't see it as a gender thing that is outside me and somehow I've light group things like that and I think there is a listening thing where a wisdom... rather than thinking with you head you listen with your heart..

L: I notice you are touching your heart...

R: I think that's God... yes I would use the word God but at one time it would have been more divine or spirit.. it would have been something that didn't carry so much baggage... God carries a lot of baggage really.. for a lot... and you know not all of it good.. you know.. some paternal thing in the sky and wagging it's finger... old testament you know that sort of image.

L: Would you call it more a connection rather than a relationship?

R: Yes... um.. I try to be connected because you can get separated from it... but then a relationship if you don't put things in... ignore... if somebody e-mails you might not respond to them... you know you are not connected are you so.... um... but it is a bit personal.... um... but um.. you know... and I am still trying to wrestle that one out.. what kind of... it isn't like a human relationship is it but... yea... I'm sort of struggling now really...

L: It's a difficult area isn't it to put words to?

R: Yes definitely but relationship? I'm not quite sure what... you know... I mean it's something I feel I ignore it.. it doesn't grow... that's why I go to Meeting....

L: It's the nurturing....

R: It's a two-way thing... I have to... participate in it so perhaps that's what relationship is.. (PARTICIPATION) and I have to actively seek out and ...

L: That's a good word.. being active...

APPENDIX E – page 6/8

R: But it's about learning as well um...I do feel I am learning and my understanding changes over time and I think... you said before.. this is just a snapshot at any point in the future it might change...I am very conscious if you had asked me two or three years ago I wouldn't have said I had a relationship that I actually felt... that I had guidance... you know.. a recent example was um...

(THIS SECTION NOT INCLUDED AS IT COULD IDENTIFY INTERVIEWEE)

L: And has that [the relationship with the spiritual] been happening, developing over the last few years you say..

R: Yea that's more recent, that's why I'm saying things change over time.

L: That's really personal, really close and personal relationship...

R: And to feel that... cause... it's about.... when ... when there is uncertainty knowing the right thing to do... having a guide the guidance.... yea so....

L: So if we move on to the central question.... it's looking at your spiritual journey particularly in respect of the kinds of assistance you've found on the way or we could use guidance... all those words... and I'm wondering if you've got ... it's the who...

R: The human who...

L: Possibly... but if there are no human who's then it's the others... books, whatever.... I was just wondering...

R: yea I was prepared for this. I think when I first went back to Meeting I was expecting.. I had loads of questions... I was a very earnest seeker ... and um... I was expecting people to be in the coffee room wanting to talk about things like that ... burning issues... I can't remember what they would have been... 20 odd years ago... and um... but... and I was quite sort of.. perhaps a bit disappointed that people didn't want to talk about anything like that. And I was a bit disappointed that people didn't um.. but then I found there were groups you could go along to and that's what began to help me.

L: So you joined the groups?

R: I can't remember what they were but I think one was loosely based on the Woodbrooke Course something like Gifts and Discoveries.... but it wasn't Gifts and Discoveries...

L: It wasn't Listening Spirituality or was it before that?

R: Before Listening Spirituality.... and that was the first time....

L: Was that an on-going group?

R: Yes it was, I think, we did whatever the programme was and there was a facilitator.

APPENDIX E – page 7/8

L: Do you remember what you valued from that... what you found helpful?

R: Um... yes funnily enough it wasn't just about spirituality..... it was about feeling accepted and part of the Meeting and.... getting to know people in the Meeting... and being part of that community.... and.. um... I think the content of the course was quite good but um.. because I was fairly new to the Meeting at that point it was ... you know.. I wasn't really sure about you know... I didn't have.... I was very much on the beginning of a journey um... and I just knew that I felt better for going to Meeting for Worship ...

L: Having gone to the group....

R: No before that so that was important to me to go the Meeting and um.... and then listening to other people...

L: In that group or generally?

R: In that group... and finding... and people were also saying that sort of.. I felt I had in common and that sort of made it... and this is something wherever I've found help all the way along the line whether it's in a book um somebody ministering it's validating my own experience.... that hearing somebody who's saying it probably better than I can, articulating something that I've experienced um.. and that I'm not wacky and I'm not on my own and .. that is human and it's ok to be interested in these things..

L: To question these things?

R: Yea um... and that sharing that and... with other people and hearing that other people have similar experiences or have similar questions or.... um... yea...

L: And how important was the...not a Quakerly word... the leader of the ... the person who was facilitating that group.. were they important or do you remember anything?

R: They were important because they had the energy and commitment to take it on and make sure it ran and... but.. that's something that I've always struggled with putting people on pedestals especially in Quakers where we ... the equality is fundamental to the work... like it's our starting point and I know it's very human to put people on pedestals but I find that and the... I can't remember... whether we all took it in turns to you know.. there might have been a bit of that or the way it was led there wasn't.. it was more like worship sharing there wasn't one person....who it depended on... and we've been lucky because groups I've been in haven't had sort of... people that might take over or anything like that you know.. because in that situation you rely on someone who has good group leading skills in order to make you know.. to manage somebody you know what I'm talking about.. you get somebody who's very needy or somebody that comes along and wants to but I think also there were quite powerful people in the group as well as the leader looking back there were people like.... talking about putting people on a pedestal... there was a member XX .. you would have heard of him and um...

L: Did he run the group?

APPENDIX E – page 8/8

R: No but he was in it. I think was he in it...I think he might have been....

L: Was his influence important or....not?

R: His support.... the fact that he was interested you know... I think that might have been.... he was considered a weighty Friends and I can remember at his funeral that a priest said he was someone very close to God because he was involved in churches together and...

L: And did you experience him as...

(SMALL SECTION CUT OUT AS IT WOULD BE IDENTIFYING)

L: So that's one early group, can you think of any other instances that have helped you on your spiritual journey, any who's?

R: Well one thing, and this is probably isn't what... it's probably not what you are looking for but it was somebody you know ...our Meeting, as it was then, had an annual go-away thing... and um.... and one of the other, somebody about my age, came up to me, she had been there a couple of years and said 'are you going?' and she said 'Come on Ruth' and she said 'it's great fun, you must come' and I went and so... I don't I'm not sure ... I certainly didn't go that year... but I've been there several times.. not last year.. I don't go every year but the fact that someone encouraged me to do something that really helped, again it made me feel accepted, part of it and valued and... um....

L: So that was a fellow Quaker? (YEA) In a particular role.. elder, overseer?

R: No just a friend, just out of the Meeting she wasn't um...

L: It was encouragement wasn't it.

R: Yea to participate you know.. are you coming... you feel that someone wants your company and since then she has rung up to say 'are you going this year'but that was quite early on and I went and I found that something that helped me was, every so often, going along to something like that is almost like a retreat even though it's not a retreat...it feels like a retreat um...and it's like recharging your batteries and that.. and I find that helps me... but and I suppose...because that friend did that invite me that was the start of me doing things like that.....

APPENDIX F

SPIRITUAL CONTACT CATEGORIES

1. PEOPLE
 - i) Role Models
 - a) Historical
 - b) Present day
 - ii) Presence
 - iii) Family
 - iv) Friends
 - v) Other faith contacts
 - vi) Other non-faith contacts
 - vii) Spiritual director/spiritual friendship
2. GROUPS
 - i) Set agenda
 - ii) On-going
 - iii) Residential
 - iv) Conferences
 - v) Other
3. COMMUNITY
 - i) Local
 - ii) National
 - iii) International
4. MEDIA
 - i) Books
 - ii) Broadcast/film/theatre
 - iii) Art
 - iv) Other

There are detailed descriptions of these categories within the actual 'analysis' section.

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