

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION - John-Francis Friendship

The ministry of Spiritual Direction is offered to individuals who are seeking to develop their relationship with God. It is an ancient tradition which, over the centuries, has established itself as an important element in the life of the Church. Those who offer this ministry do so after careful training and they, like you, desire to grow before their Creator. They have also realised the need to work with someone as they seek to respond to the love of God calling them into wholeness and holiness. Much of this ministry concerns the way an individual seeks to make sense of the movements going on within them and to discern how to respond in a way that moves them towards God. No Spiritual Director has the answers to life's questions, but the Director will listen, ask open, sometimes probing, questions and will try to help in your own desire for integration and growth before God. Having a space to explore the movements of your heart and discerning how God is drawing you, is one important aspect of how we grow into the people God is creating us to be.

It is important that you are aware of some of the 'norms' associated with this ministry and these will be explored in the initial interview. I have, therefore, prepared the following notes to help you prepare for this:

- An initial interview will explore if both parties sense they can work together. At this point neither of us is committed to an on-going process. As such it gives both an opportunity to get to know each other a little and to explore what is understood by, and required from, Spiritual Direction. You will not need to decide whether to go ahead at the end of our time together. You may want to see other Directors. Both of us should take time to discern if it is right to work together and you can telephone or email (020 3583 9312 or jff2209@yahoo.com) after a few days to give your response. Answering "no" is just as acceptable as "yes".
- You should ask yourself what you understand by Spiritual Direction and what you want from such a relationship. Do you have any particular concerns?
- *Confidentiality* is essential. However there are two caveats:
 - a) As a Director I undergo regular Supervision. There may be times when I need to (anonymously) discuss aspects of Direction with my Supervisor. This is quite normal for all who seek to act professionally, e.g. doctors. It is also a means whereby a Director can be accountable to someone for this ministry;
 - b) If issues of child, or vulnerable person, abuse emerge or if I consider the Directee is 'at risk' I would discuss such concerns with that person as well as agreeing any course of action.

I also maintain brief notes about matters that may have arisen. These are kept in a secure place and would be destroyed when I ceased to be your Director. You are welcome to view these.

- It is important for me to know if you are having, or have recently received *therapy or counselling* or are under any medication which might create serious side-effects. If you would like *prayer* to form part of our time together then I am happy to talk with you about how this might be expressed.
- As I depend on this ministry to provide some of my income, I do ask for a *donation*. Your gift will also cover such matters as on-going training, Supervision and, where applicable, room hire. These costs amount to roughly £15. As a guide this might be equivalent to your hourly income or you may consider the value you place on this ministry. If you are unemployed I would be happy with whatever you felt you can afford.
- In order to develop a developing relationship it is normal to meet once every 6 – 8 weeks, although this might be more frequent if necessary. Some people feel a need to email or telephone between sessions and, whilst this is not ideal, I would be happy to respond providing this was understood to be an exception. If you are not able to make an appointment then I would ask that you let me know as soon as possible. If I am paying for a room then it may be necessary to ask you to cover this cost.
- If you decide to proceed I would expect that, after about 5 sessions, we would review the relationship to see how it's working for both of us. This review would consider the process and content of our time together with the idea of looking at the effectiveness/suitability of the process and whether we are both confident in the way the relationship is developing. Such Reviews would take place from time to time (say 18 months).

'Whether or not one is aware of it, God is constantly engaged with the human heart. God is present, inviting, cajoling, challenging, enabling, always loving persons to be who they are At some point in the spiritual journey we are awakened to this love affair and the subsequent choice to claim the primacy of love in our lives. For some this may show itself as an insatiable passion for truth or for justice, for others it may be a deep reverence for beauty, and still for others it may appear as the drawing of the heart to compassionate service. Others may sense only that beneath the pain, the joy, the complacency of their lives there is a Reality which can no longer be ignored. However this longing shows itself, it is ultimately a longing for God. This longing for God is the bedrock of the spiritual life and of spiritual direction. (Rose Mary Dougherty)