

Session 2 Being a Becoming Friends companion

Group session

90 minutes

Resources:

- Handout 1 × one each Activity 1
- Focus slips × one per pair Activity 1
- Focus sheet 1 × 4 Activity 2
- Post-it notes and pens Activity 2
- Large sheets of paper and marker pen Activity 2
- Handout 2 × one each Activity 2

Welcome and worship 5 minutes

Session introduction 5 minutes

Purpose of this session: to explore our understanding and experience of spiritual friendship and to develop increased awareness of the role of a Becoming Friends companion.

Activity 1 An introduction to spiritual friendship 20 minutes

Introduction 10

Pairs sharing 10

1. Introduction

- Distribute Handout 1. Read extracts aloud around the group
- What are Quaker approaches to and experiences of spiritual friendship? The facilitator may briefly share any personal insights into or experiences of spiritual friendship, especially as a Becoming Friends companion

2. Pairs sharing

- Divide into pairs. Provide Focus slips
- Invite people to share personal understandings or experiences of spiritual friendship

Focus question for pairs sharing:

What is my own understanding and experience of spiritual friendship?

Activity 2 Self-awareness as a Becoming Friends companion 50 minutes

Silent thought shower 15

Listing activity 15

Discussion 20

1. Silent thought shower – Gifts and skills as a companion

- Place the large sheet of paper on the table or floor. Provide Post-it notes and pens. Display the Focus sheets
- Read out this introduction: ‘We all have gifts and skills, strengths and limitations that we bring to the companion role. This activity invites us to become more aware of our own gifts and skills as a companion.’
- Invite people in the silence to write their responses to the Focus question, one idea per note, as many as they like, and to place these without comment on the paper
- Still in silence, invite people to move around (or swivel the paper) to read the notes, add more and consider that they too may have the gifts and skills others have written
- You could refer to the list of ideas on page 18

Focus question for thought shower:

What are the gifts and skills that I can bring to the companion role?

2. Listing activity – Diversity and ‘tender’ areas

- Read out this introduction: ‘Even the most open-minded of us makes unconscious assumptions about other people, both trivial and more serious, based on what they look like and say. It is important as companions to be aware of this tendency in ourselves, to help us guard against making assumptions or judgements about the newcomer we are supporting. What areas could be “tender” or sensitive ones for us as individuals or as British Quakers?’
- In the whole group, invite people to contribute ideas of ‘tender’ areas. Write the suggestions in a list on a large sheet of paper
- You could refer to the list of ideas on page 19

3. Discussion – Boundaries as a companion

- Distribute Handout 2. Read aloud to the group. Also read the brief section on confidentiality and openness from [Guidance for meetings](#) in Appendix 2 of the online course (page 281 of the course book)
- Invite comment and discussion about the issues affecting boundaries for a companion, noting any important elements on a large sheet of paper

Closing worship

5 minutes

Notices

5 minutes

Session 2

Self-study activities

Purpose of this session: to explore our understanding and experience of spiritual friendship and to develop increased awareness of the role of a Becoming Friends companion.

Activity 1 An introduction to spiritual friendship 20 minutes

- Read Handout 1
- You could reflect on the Activity 1 Focus question by:
 - journalling
 - sharing with a friend
 - discussing it with other companions in the discussion forums in the online companion area

Focus question for Activity 1:

What is my own understanding and experience of spiritual friendship?

Activity 2 Self-awareness as a Becoming Friends companion 35 minutes

Silent thought shower	10
Listing activity	10
Reflection and discussion	15

1. Silent thought shower – Gifts and skills as a companion

- We all have gifts and skills, strengths and limitations that we bring to the companion role. This activity invites you to become more aware of your own gifts and skills as a companion
- Take a moment in silence, holding yourself in the Light, before writing your responses to the Focus question. Consider what other people who know you well might write about your gifts and skills, then add these to your list too
- You could refer to the list of ideas on page 18

Focus question for thought shower:

What are the gifts and skills that I can bring to the companion role?

2. Listing activity – Diversity and ‘tender’ areas

- Read the introduction to Activity 2.2 in the group session instructions
- Make a list of ideas of these ‘tender’ areas
- You could refer to the list of ideas on page 19

3. Reflection and discussion – Boundaries as a companion

- Read Handout 2. Also read the brief section on confidentiality and openness from [Guidance for meetings](#) in Appendix 2 of the online course (page 281 of the course book)
- Consider what you think are the issues affecting boundaries for a companion, noting down any important elements. If possible, discuss these questions with elders, overseers and others in your meeting

Session 2 Handout 1

Spiritual friendship

1

I have found in my life that from time to time when revelling in new-found joys or faced with decision, problem or grief, there must be for me a listening ear. Even if my listener says little but sheds over me a feeling of rejoicing with me, of being alongside me as I strive, of sorrowing with me in my hour of distress, then I can better appreciate or face the situation. I believe this is true for most of us. There are moments when we need one another. If this sometimes unuttered cry is answered, then truly we meet, and do not grope or slip past each other. But if two individuals share at an even deeper level from out of their own experience in their search for ultimate reality in life, then the divine in the human shines through and a new creation is born for both.

Margaret S Gibbins, 1969, *Quaker faith & practice* 21.15

2

I wonder whether we do not need to rediscover the possibilities of a friendship in which the deepest areas of experience may be shared. Certainly that kind of openness seems to have existed in earlier generations among a group who were very significant in the life of the Society. Until this century it was not uncommon for Friends to travel in the ministry, following a real sense of leading in this direction. Often they went out in pairs, one older, one younger. The study of their travels shows, I think, that their friendship became one in which they could open to one another their struggles and failures, their hopes and visions, when they became for each other the way through to the presence of God. On their journeyings, too, they met with Friends in their homes, seeking times for worship and prayer together, sometimes with whole families, sometimes with individuals. In this way they shared help on the inner journey with those with whom they met.

Christopher Holdsworth, 1985, *Quaker faith & practice* 22.06

3

At the age of 16 William Caton, an early member of the Swarthmoor household, wrote in 1652 of the love that enfolded all who became part of Margaret Fell's home:

Truly willing we were to sympathise and bear one with another, to be helpful one unto another, and in true and tender love to watch over one another. And, oh the love, mercy and power of God, which abounded to us, through us and among us; who shall declare it? And hence came that worthy family to be so renowned in the nation, the fame of which spread much among Friends. And the power and presence of the Lord being so much there with us, it was as a means to induce many, even from far, to come thither, so that at one time there would have been Friends out of five or six counties... I was cherished and encouraged in the way of life by my entirely beloved friend Margaret Fell, who as a tender-hearted nursing-mother cared for me and was tender of me as if I had been one of her own children; oh, the kindness, the respect and friendship which she showed me ought never to be forgotten by me.

Quaker faith & practice 22.22

What is my own understanding and experience of spiritual friendship?

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What are the gifts and skills that I can bring to the companion role?

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Session 2 Handout 2

Boundaries as a Becoming Friends companion

Important aspects to consider include:

- Places, spaces and times for meeting. Making clear boundaries for your time with the other person
- How do you want to communicate, including whether to have phone contact? Is note-taking okay?
- Being clear about the companion role
- What's in and what's out of your conversations?
- Confidentiality
- Will it sometimes be appropriate to challenge the other person?
- Handling any conflict
- When you need to signpost the newcomer to other sources of support or help
- Checking how boundaries may change as you go along

able to listen to you
checks things out with you
has a caring, friendly approach
the ability to smile
affirming of the newcomer and the Quaker tradition
a sense of humour
the ability to be clear
someone who is prepared to fill gaps and give information sometimes
not giving advice
they know they're not the focus
comfortable with others' beliefs, even if they're different from theirs, and being willing to explore
trust
respect
'travelling' themselves a bit too
hearing what is meant rather than being put off by words
a gentle challenge – maybe with a twinkle in the eye
sometimes coming from an unexpected point of view or having a wider perspective
openness and honesty
someone who has their own prayer life
steadiness, expansiveness and holding the place of possibility for the newcomer
not easily shocked – giving permission for the newcomer to say whatever they need to
accepting of human fallibility
flexibility and responsiveness
not being in a hurry
humility
someone who knows their own limits / is prepared to ask for help or signpost a newcomer to other sources of support
non-expert

Christian or other religious identity
gender
ethnicity and race
attitudes to the Bible
different approaches to learning
definiteness or uncertainty
language or words getting in the way
sexuality or sexual orientation
relationship to or concepts of God eg 'Creator' and 'Creation'
human relationships
stewardship and green issues or behaviour
additional needs of the newcomer or companion (eg through disability)
being a birthright Friend or not
theology
concepts
feminist / non-feminist stances
the idea of 'obedience' or 'discipline'
class
particular author may be liked / disliked
lifestyle / wealth / privilege
intellect
pacifism
politics
dress and make-up
mental health
occupation
family and children