

Appendix 2: Responses to the Questionnaire

1. Basic Information

Sex: Female = 12; male = 1

Age: 30-39 years = 2

40-49 years = 2

50-59 years = 7

60-69 years = 2

Career: Mother 4

Teacher 3

Spiritual Director 4

Minister 1

Dentist 1

Social work 1

Shop assistant 1

2. Spiritual Direction

Length of time receiving direction: less than 1 year 1

1-2 years 3

2-5 years 3

5-10 years 0

10-15 years 4

15-20 years 2

What led you to begin direction?

Attending a retreat in daily life.

Recommended by a friend.

Reading about it.

Knowing it was a requirement of work.

Hearing someone talk about it.

A friend started training to be a director, and needed a directee.

A desire to find out more fully who I am.

Getting myself sorted out, and becoming more aware that I could speak to someone about God.

I attended an information evening, which sparked my interest.

The desire to explore new ways of faith introduced to me on retreat.

Has your experience been largely negative or positive

12 - largely positive

2 - there have been some difficult times

1 - negative of changing a friendship, and not really understanding what it was about.

1 - an initial experience with an untrained director, who put her own stuff on me.

What made it so?

The amount of trust – making self vulnerable.

Personal fit, being able to relate to director.

Being able to trust the director and be challenged by her.

A safe, non-judgmental, non-threatening space.

Accountability.

Neutral observer who can notice markers.

Being able to be open to God, to change, to challenge.

Being encouraged to be oneself.

Personality and skills of the director.

Receiving empathy, being understood and listened to in a nonjudgmental way.

Being able to articulate and explore issues and be gently challenged.

A sense of ongoing direction and focus for the future.

Based on personal growth.

Professionalism of directors in being skilled listeners, keeping an appropriate distance, and being people of spirituality and journey themselves.

Being able to trust director totally.

Sensing God in the process.

Nonjudgmental approach, being accepted.

Outsider feeding back.

Degree of accountability.

Total acceptance – never any shoulds or oughts.

Someone affirming her faith and believing in her.

Belief her questions and thoughts were real – not given pat answers.

Someone who has a real grasp of your spiritual journey and knows what is happening between you and God. Talking helps to clarify my journey for me. Motivation to keep a quiet time.

Has spiritual direction been of more use to you over a sustained period or of more use in times of crisis?

Wonderful in crisis and periods of burnout, but not of more use at that time than in any other.

More aware in difficult times of the need for a safe neutral place of understanding, but in other times it keeps the focus on God in my journey.

Useful over all; the times when I expected least, I received the most. It is valuable to talk to someone about faith journey.

Sustained process leads to accountability and reflection on journey to deepen its meaning. Inherent value and necessity.

More useful over a longer period..

Sustained period: ongoing relationship for growth and unfolding and self-discipline. Gives routine and accountability.

More use over a sustained period. Was of least use when I was very busy and was trying to slot it in, and going every 8 weeks, which was just not enough.

Began direction in a period of crisis and then continued for 3 years. Now I use direction as needed.

There is a place for direction in both crisis and ongoing journey.

Direction is indispensable in crisis times or in decision-making but valuable for building an ongoing relationship with God.

Both, but more in crisis and life change.

What changes have occurred in your life since you began direction?

My concept of God has been blown! I now understand an unconditionally loving God and gained an excitement in my faith which I had lost. My involvement in church has waned and I have resigned membership.

Lots of changes: Worked through the death of a relationship, changed jobs, changed music teacher. I know my own heart.

Huge changes in ministry and personal life.

Stopped attending church!

I've been helped to front up to myself, become more aware of my own issues and growth.

My concept of God has changed considerably : from the evangelical mold, seeing God like my father – with a focus on right and wrong – sin and judgement. Now I'm comfortable with unanswered questions and more open to exploring the edges. God is a whole lot bigger.

Life direction has clarified because I am a lot less concerned about what others might think of me.

All the midlife changes: empty nest, home and business changes, deaths of parents and friends. Huge endings and transitions and move from an external doing phase towards a focus on the interior life.

The biggest change is within myself – the way I feel about myself and my beliefs. I have grown spiritually.

I have definitely become more contemplative, and more accepting of myself and other people.

Changes occurred before I went to direction. (Resulting in withdrawal from participation in a Pentecostal church). Direction helped me to dare to believe that God was leading the change and that it was OK.

Getting to grips with who I am and who is God and what I believe.

(Husband)'s death. I've grown outside of my evangelical box, which has taken me a long time to do. Growing in love with Jesus. The Bible moved from being a book of law to a book of love and spiritual direction was instrumental in that.

3. Relationship with God.

Yes, huge changes. My concept of God is much bigger –unconditional love, feminine words and images. I am much more comfortable with truth in other religions, and living with questions not answers.

Yes, the relationship has got a lot deeper. Jesus is now my best friend. Increased prayer and Bible study. I see a more loving and compassionate God. I allow myself to be more receptive of him.

Yes, it is more open and I am more aware of communication in pictures and words. My concept of the size and capacity of God has been hugely enlarged. At the moment I am getting to know Jesus and his heart for people.

Yes, it (the relationship) has become something that permeates each day – a way of living. I have taken more responsibility for my own faith – reading, spiritual direction. I see God's depth of love, rather than the vindictive judgmental side. MY relationship with God is less formal and more relaxed.

God is much more present and personal – not just in church or in prayer. It is a more intimate God who awakens my response. I have moved away from God expectation (a God of duty) to a God of love. He invites me to be honest, in a real relationship. It is much free-er.

My concept of God has changed considerably. I have moved from seeing God like my father and of a right and wrong, sin and judgment, doing and getting it right focus. I am now more comfortable with unanswered questions, and I am more open to exploring the edges. God is a whole lot bigger. I relate to God quite differently – in a walk along the beach. Exploring God in silence was a completely foreign concept before. I have an ability to meet God in unexpected places, meeting God in the secular – such as in a string quartet.

Yes, my relationship with God is always changing. Direction is a useful place for me to go to talk about what I am discovering. I have discovered new ways of looking at theology, examining things relevant to my life, sex and gender.

No, my theology hasn't changed, but there has been growth. I am more aware of God's grace, unconditional love. I never had a view of God as a judge – I'd known God's grace and love without fully understanding it. I have learned to dance with God. I am more open to allow him to be present in different ways. I used to seek him, but now I'm more willing to just be. I've always been aware of God in and around me. The relationship has changed – I've stepped in to God, a whole new relationship with God.

Yes, I have a much bigger God. A bit of a paradox: at the same time more transcendent and more intimate. I can relate to him much more easily and in any situation, any time or any place because God just is.

I do view God differently. I have found him to be a kinder God, and I can accept his love more. Now I am seeing him in the every day and in creation.

I used to do lots of Bible reading – 4 sets of daily study notes – now I have just stopped. God wasn't there any more.

Yes, God is much more benevolent than I'd thought and much more forgiving. God of unconditional love and grace.

My theology has the same root. Basic theology hasn't changed. Peripheral issues have expanded hugely. The humanity of Jesus. A major shift for me has been the recognition that bad and good cannot be separated out - suffering and joy – and both

are essential to our growth. I relate to God much more lovingly. An amazing, compassionate, tender God... but I stand more in awe of God than ever before.

4. Church Affiliation

Anglican 6

Presbyterian 2

Roman Catholic 2

Church leaver/Christian 3

Impact on church community

9 None

3...left churches

Comments:

I couldn't continue in the Pentecostal church I attended. It wasn't to do with the church – it was to do with me, so I wrote them a letter explaining that I was following a new path in God. Now I am attending another church, not very regularly.

Leaving the church and beginning spiritual direction coincided.

The God that I was discovering in spiritual direction could not be contained in the church that I attended, so I left and for a year did nothing. Three years ago I began attending an Anglican church.

Spiritual direction opened up a new way of thinking that does not sit well with fundamental evangelical thought.

How important is spiritual direction to your faith?

Fairly important.

Not that important

Vital – my church is not feeding me one scrap.

It is a lifeline, and gives me an anchor when I am not going to church.

I have always had a strong faith. Spiritual direction is an aid. My faith would have grown without spiritual direction but it would have been harder.

It is important in keeping me accountable to both my relationship with God and self – for spiritual health and wellbeing. Without it, I would drift off more.

It is very important because I do not have a church. It is one of the few outside Christian inputs that I have.

Crucial. Without it, I would have been disillusioned and angry because the church would not allow me to express who I was. Spiritual direction allowed me to do that. Eventually without it, I might have left the church.

Important in that I can explore my faith more intimately in a way that you can't in a church service.

It was very important in the year of not attending church, and it still is important because a lot of times going to church does little to build or maintain my faith, apart from the worship and communion.

Spiritual direction helps me stay on track. I could never go away from God, but it gives an outlet and a vent to discuss things and prevents me from reverting.

God is bigger than the church – not just in it. I am free-er of the view of church defining faith.

5. Relationship with others

I have been freed up in my relationships with others: more accepting of them and less inclined to give pat answers. I am more aware of concentrating on my family which is a priority for me.

Training to be a spiritual director developed out of being a directee. I am also involved in leading Quiet Days and reflective worship. Spiritual direction is for the select privileged few, and it is not very accessible to everyone. There is something about social justice stirring in me now.

I am more sure of my faith and not so afraid to speak about it. I am involved in a prayer group at the school where I work. I will also discuss faith matters with my family.

I have built connections with other people who are on a similar journey. I tutor and present a diocesan faith development programme. I care for my granddaughter. Because God copes with my questions, I can sit with friends who question their spirituality and can listen to others... Being aware of my own spiritual journey makes me more aware of others' journey. After about 10 years of direction, I trained to become a spiritual director. I am also involved in teaching spirituality to nursing students.

I run a toddlers' music group, and have developed a deeper love and compassion for the mothers who come. I have developed a passion for people who have left church – and am involved with others through the book club.

As I journey there is a continual exploring and challenge in my attitudes to other people. Spiritual direction holds me accountable. I have been encouraged and affirmed in ministry through spiritual direction.

Spiritual direction has helped me deal with difficulties in relationships. I am at a stage of burnout where I need to be rather than do.

Some people are very uncomfortable with the idea that I am going to spiritual direction and ask if it is New Age or Catholic. I see my role offering an open home to others especially those exploring their faith.

My relationship with others has only been affected in a second hand sense because I am more accepting of who I am. In accepting myself, I can accept others.

Yes, very early on in spiritual direction one of the retreats I went on – (challenged me) how can I not let people be without wanting to change them. My attitude to people has utterly changed. I always loved them, but I love them more. I trust Jesus' role in their lives more. Activities which reach out to others: my work does, as it is pastoring regularly. I reach out to single mums in my parish as I have a real passion for them. I teach parents, workshops on family , relationships and life in general! Sometimes I preach.

I aim to treat others as God relates to me, with compassion with warmth and understanding. In each day, each situation, each person, this is God present. I notice other people, in just the small interactions with them.

6. Relationship with self

Growth in awareness of my shadow and projections. I am more accepting of who I am. I have been encouraged, affirmed and challenged to live fully with who I am. My own giftedness has been affirmed. I have become aware of how I am in each situation and with each person.

I have more of a sense of purpose. I have learned techniques of prayer and contemplation. Doors have opened up to new experiences, like writing.

I have done a lot of reflecting and reading. Spiritual direction provides a place to talk about it and to bring issues concrete.

I am kinder to myself and more accepting of situations and my way of dealing with them. I value myself more; honour myself in not being so busy. Shoulds oughts and have tos have flown out the door. In some ways I have fewer goals. If I was told that I had 2 weeks to live, this would have been the best year because I have been who I am and had the time for nurturing my family which is my priority. I have been freed up to know what is valuable to me and to actually do it.

Yes, spiritual direction has helped my relationship with myself, but it also ties in with mid-life issues. I don't see I have to go out and save the world, but if I do decide to go in a particular direction it will involve being myself. I am a lot more laid-back. I allow desires to come up rather than deny them.

Yes, hugely. I understand, know and accept myself to a much greater extent. I feel as if I have found my place in the world – this is what I was made to do in the world. It has really turned my life around.

I have learned to become myself more. God made me and it is good. I have learned to care for myself and be creative.

Being able to talk through and have stuff reflected back has made me much more aware of who I am. My goals and outlook have evolved in journey of which spiritual direction is a part.

I know myself a lot better. I am much more respectful of my dreams, hopes and deep yearnings. I have learned to be aware of my body being a valid expression of who I am, and of feelings in my body. My life goals have altered.

Spiritual direction has affected my knowledge of myself and my goals and outlook. They have changed and focussed and are being renewed all the time. Spiritual direction is an important time for hearing myself.

Yes, I understand why and how I am. I understand myself better. I have changed from thinking of myself as nobody to think that I have an important place and effect on the world – like the last snowflake. Little things are important to God. My goals are more focussed. God plays a bigger part.

Has been affected totally. You can't look in the face of God and not know yourself. I'm much more aware of how far short I fall, of being a sinner, but I am much less grovelling about it! My life goals have never changed : to glorify God and enjoy him forever!

7. Enneagram / Myers Briggs (if known)

Myers Briggs: ISFP, ISFJ, INFP (2), INFJ,
ESFJ (3) = 8

Enneagram: 1, 2, 4 (4), 5, 6 = 8

Unknown = 4.

8. Pitfalls

Spiritual direction must be totally rooted in Scripture, in the word of God. There is a danger that direction can deviate from God and pick up practices not of God, that come from humanism or whatever.

If you can't trust or be real or authentic, there would be no point in direction. It is a process of being more real and more authentic. You do it in one place and it becomes closer in your whole life. If you're not real, you become conflicted. It is unhelpful if the director and directee don't click, or if the director has his/her own hobby horses coming through.

Becoming too dependent on a director. There must be an awareness of personality differences and an awareness of the director's gift. There needs to be trust. It would not be helpful if a person wasn't going to be honest with the director.

The boundary with counselling needs to be watched. A person must be able to get on with their director. Not being able to trust would be disastrous.

If you didn't get on with the director, or trust them and their ability to hear what you are saying and move you on. If you aren't prepared to turn yourself inside out, you aren't going to get the full value. (It requires) deeper vulnerability.

Equality is important – that it is not a spiritual hierarchy.

If a director does not follow good practice – listening, confidentiality, empathy. Too strong a personality in the director.

An expectation that the director will do the work for you.

If the director puts his/her own stuff (vulnerability or agenda) on people. Training should prevent that.

The personality of the director and where the director is at – power play and potential for spiritual abuse. The boundary between spiritual direction and counselling. Person being directed develop a dependency on the relationship.

The spiritual director would have to be very good at not letting you lean on them. It is not necessarily useful for all people - people who don't pray. Some people may need to leave it aside in favour of other tools like counselling. It may not be helpful to high extroverts – action people.

There need to be safeguards to ensure that people are trained to prevent the development of unhealthy relationships between director and directee.

Trust, confidentiality. Not understanding directee. If you think you have outgrown the director or if the director does not respect you – giving you advice and telling you what to do. Challenge is necessary. Some personality types may not gel.

9. Overall Comment.

Huge personal and spiritual growth.

Spiritual direction has given me the opportunity to spend time reflecting on the importance of my relationship with God in a place which provides safety and encouragement – and doesn't exist anywhere else. It is a unique opportunity.

I have a contentment – I am at ease with my life. I would not have coped with many things that have happened without it.

From my own experience, it (spiritual direction) is a rich gift.

It is a very helpful positive experience, just being able to share some of the deep things that are going on in your life knowing that the person is not going to abuse it, but support you in it.

It has been wonderful – helped me interpret. A check and a caution. It has helped me to be kind to myself and not to push myself. I am looking after myself more and accepting my own limitations.

It has changed my life. It has been one of the most significant things I have ever done.

It has been just wonderful; I would encourage anyone to attend (spiritual direction).

Spiritual direction provides someone who believes in me and affirms me. The acceptance is wonderful.

The whole realm of theology and ways of looking at the world has opened up. The books I have read have also helped.

Spiritual direction is hugely important for people in ministry. It has kept me sane and healthy through personal and ministry changes. It keeps me grounded and accountable. Spiritual direction provides a tool or opportunity for sharper focus and clarity.

It gives a person a safe place to talk freely, which they might not otherwise have. There is not enough accountability in the church and this is a great way to make you pull your spiritual socks up!

It has had a profound impact on my love relationship with God, on my awareness of myself and of how God and I relate. It has profoundly affected my ability to listen to him. It has brought a deep contentment to my life and a huge integration. I feel much more whole than ever before.