

## GLOUCESTERSHIRE AREA QUAKER MEETING JOB DESCRIPTION

**Title: AM Pastoral Friend (Overseer)**

### **General Context of the Role (Quaker Faith and Practice: Chapter 12):**

The Area Meeting makes numerous appointments. Not least is the appointing of Pastoral Friends to help sustain pastoral care. Although we strive to be a “priesthood of all believers”, it is realistic and right to share out tasks to help meet the needs of Friends and Attenders in the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

All of us have human failings and needs and skills. All of us need reminding from time to time of the support and care that is available within Britain Yearly Meeting as well as outside it, e. g. on specialist and other services far beyond anything the Society itself can provide. None of us is entire unto himself or herself.

We are reminded of Isaac Pennington’s words: *‘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 for one another, and helping one another up with a tender hand.’*

The duties of the Pastoral Friend as set out in Quaker Faith and Practice do look very extensive; but no-one being nominated (or asked to consider letting their name go forward) should let themselves feel daunted. The role is organised so that we can all bring our own talents into play, and make effective use of them

You are not asked to tackle things beyond your capacity .....i.e. to be swamped. The task is not always *doing*. It is frequently *facilitating*. You work *with other pastoral Friends*, not alone and share problems and ideas. Pastoral Friends meet like any gathering of Friends to seek divine guidance. They do not expect to perform miracles; they offer and test their own ideas.

### **Experience and qualifications sought:**

You should be an active member of your worshipping group. It helps if you are well acquainted with other people in your local Meeting and within the AM. Effective – but sensitive - networking, and the ability to listen can be very powerful attributes. Knowing of people’s needs or difficulties can be useful, though pastoral Care is not about prying or interrogation. Information and strength come in working as a group, at LM or AM.

Formal qualifications are not required. What is wanted of someone becoming a pastoral Friend is readiness to try and learn how to help others with some of life’s difficulties, not to solve brilliantly every problem that appears. You do not have to do it all yourself – you are part of a team, each of whom has different talents and experience. What is asked is that you may learn to become a ‘good enough’ pastoral Friend.

## **Main Responsibilities:**

The main responsibility is the pastoral care of members and attenders of the Meeting. Ensure that no-one falls through the net, and that appropriate support is there to meet everyone's needs. This is not generally a chore. It is far more likely to be a delight for you and those you meet, though there will be times when caring for someone will have a difficult or tiresome aspect. At such times you properly look to another overseer / pastoral Friend for succour or encouragement or for guidance. And there may be times when you assist someone in finding very specialised help, whether practical or personal.

Pastoral care of the meeting may be organised in a number of different ways. For example:

Each pastoral Friend may have a 'list' of people, for whom they are given specific responsibilities of oversight / pastoral care,

Meeting may be organised into a network or 'tree' of Friends and attenders, who each watch over (and are watched over by) a small number of other people. In this case, pastoral Friends have the role of facilitator, making sure that the process works well, but also taking ultimate responsibility for the wellbeing of those in Meeting

Local pastoral Friends meet at appropriate intervals to consider the wellbeing of the Meeting and of those who attend (or who are prevented from so doing?) and to see in what ways help may be given them, being aware of their - and your - needs and capacities.

Area Meeting pastoral Friends meet from time to time, generally 2 or 3 per year. These meetings are very useful for discussing issues, sharing best practice – and sometimes just for sharing! A number of powerful minutes have come from these meetings.

## **Rewards and satisfactions of the job:**

Helping fellow Members and Attenders to be part of the Meeting and to develop spiritually and in practical ways will be quietly rewarding and may bring much joy to anyone who undertakes the work in the spirit of service and of contribution. It is a wonderful opportunity to get to know Friends 'in those things which are eternal'

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No one should feel inadequate if asked to consider the role of pastoral Friend. The main requirement is a willing and open heart. The skills and inadequacies you bring may be exactly what is required at a certain time.

RE-written by A & P Turrall and AM Pastoral Friends April 2014