Sensing The Extraordinary Within The Ordinary:

Understanding the spiritual lives of people living and working within Camphill Communities.

John Swinton, Aileen Falconer and Stephanie Brock

This work was commissioned by the Camphill Village Trust and funded by them with contributions from the Anthroposophical Medical Trust and Camphill Medical Practice Ltd.

Camphill Village Trust (www.cvt.org.uk) is a national charity supporting adults with learning disabilities, mental health problems and other special needs. It supports people in their home life, work, social and cultural activities through 11 urban and rural communities in England and Scotland.

The work was carried out by the **Centre for Spirituality, Health and Disability** (www.abdn.ac.uk/cshad) at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, UK. The Centre has a dual focus: a) on the relationship between theology and contemporary healthcare practices and b) on the theology and spirituality of disability. It is a multidisciplinary centre which aims to enable researchers, practitioner and educators to work together to develop innovative and creative research projects and teaching initiatives.

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Executive Summary

1. What is spirituality?

A difficult concept to articulate

Spirituality was perceived to be a difficult concept to articulate. This was so for both residents and also, at times, for co-workers. Both residents and co-workers displayed an intuitive sense of what spirituality was *about* - how it impacted upon their experience and practice - rather than what it *was* as an intellectualised concept or idea. This lack of formal conceptualisation and articulation does not necessarily mean that spirituality is inexpressible. Rather it seemed to indicate that formal conceptual or definitional language was not the way in which people chose to articulate this aspect of their life experience. In other words, the nature of the area of human experience that spirituality refers to requires a different form of language (narrative, imagery etc) than the formal language of rational definition. Residents in particular (but not exclusively) expressed their sense of how spirituality impacted upon their lives through reference to concrete experiences and practices. For them, spirituality had to do with sensing the extraordinary within the ordinary. Nonetheless, both residents and co-workers expressed a heightened awareness of the significance of spirituality and spiritual experiences at particular points in their life, particularly at times of crises such as illness, death and trauma.

A significant aspect of life

Spirituality was recognised as a significant dimension in the lives of the people we spoke to within the Camphill communities - residents, co-workers and employees. It was generally perceived to be important for both individual and community life, although definitions and understandings of precisely what spiritually was were varied and diverse.

A framework for living

Ideas and perspectives on spirituality created world-views and explanatory frameworks within which people made sense of and interpreted the events that occurred within their lives and the lives of those around them. In other words, spirituality was more than a set of beliefs about certain issues; it was the way in which people made sense of everything that occurred to them in every aspect of their lives.

Life as a spiritual journey

A strong unifying theme that emerged with the co-workers was the belief that their life was a 'spiritual journey', within which there were many different paths. We might draw these paths together under four headings, each of which had a different emphasis indicating the primary mode of engagement with spirituality:

1. *experiential:*originating and being sustained through personal inner experience
2. *intellectual:*engaging the mind with the paradoxes and puzzles inherent in existential questions
3. *confirmational:*adopting concepts which confirmed an already chosen 'world-view'
4. *revelatory:*seeking to find 'truth' wherever it might be revealed

All had had different starting points for their 'spiritual journeys'. Some people's spiritual journeys were initiated from previous experiences with religion; others emerged from different roots such as trauma, loneliness or a general existential search for 'truth'.

Universality yet individuality of spirituality

Spirituality was perceived as a fluid and contextual concept that had individual and universal implications. At one level, it was generally acknowledged as a universal phenomenon which related to all people. All

people have a spirituality in some shape or form. However, its particular manifestations were varied, contextual and individual. The individuality of spiritual expression posed problems and challenges for community living. What was perceived as supportive to spiritual well-being for one person often had quite a different and even opposite function for another. For example, festivals as celebrated within Camphill were seen to have the potential to foster both inclusion and exclusion. For some these were important spiritual resting places; for others they were irrelevant impositions. Thus, what 'works' for one person may have the opposite effect on others. This being so, spiritual strategies that are inflexible, unreflexive and fail to take note of the diversity of spiritual experiences and desires will inevitably be problematic. There is thus a need to discern and to be sensitive to the underlying diversity of meaning that people place on particular spiritual practices. What is good for one person may not be good for others.

Such individuality of spiritual expression inevitably offers a threat to the cohesion of the community at a certain level. This appeared to be more so in a community without boundaries such as Stourbridge, which is set in an urban context and is not a traditional village community. The lack of physical boundaries and 'village identity' meant that it was perhaps less able to 'hold' divergent expressions of spirituality and still retain a strong sense of community. The size of a community might also have an influence on its ability to accommodate divergent and individual expressions of spirituality insofar as within smaller communities there are less people and therefore differences are more obvious and less easily 'absorbed' than within larger communities.

2. Spirituality and spiritual well-being

There was an important difference between spirituality (understood as a formal and definable concept) and spiritual well-being (understood as the

outcome of engagement with the beliefs and practices that emerge from a person's spirituality).

Spirituality might be understood as a general term for those aspects of a person's belief system that contributed to a sense of meaning or purpose in life. Spirituality thus understood is the foundation for spiritual practices.

Spiritual well-being differs from spirituality in the sense that it is the end result of how well one's spirituality has functioned in terms of facilitating meaning, purpose, hope, relationship and so forth. One may use many different ways and modes to achieve such well-being – prayer, meditation, Scripture, work, community, relationships and so forth – but such things are primarily practical tools designed to facilitate the search for meaning and, in some cases, contact with the Divine and a movement towards a sense of wholeness and connectedness.

3. Religious and non–religious expressions of spirituality

Whilst a number of people expressed their spirituality through traditional forms of religion, primarily Christianity but also other religions such as paganism, there was a general acknowledgement that spirituality included, but was not defined by, religion.

Even so, religion remained a significant vehicle for the expression of some people's spirituality. Religion was described as the framework within which they made sense of the world and found structures which helped them cope with life's difficulties. It was, for some, a basic point of orientation in their lives; a lens through which they looked as they made sense of what happened to them in good times and in bad. When people reflected on such deep issues as death and the afterlife, their religion offered both guidance and hope.

Whilst some people had a formal commitment to a particular religious system, others mixed their religion, primarily their Christian religion, with insights and values from anthroposophy, creating a fascinating blend of perspectives. A good example of this was the way in which the ideas of reincarnation, karma and destiny, which are not traditional Christian ideas, were melded with traditional Christianity to provide a spiritual framework that people found spiritually edifying.

4. Informal and formal spiritual practices

Spiritual practices were important as a mode for the outworking of people's spirituality. Spiritual practices (prayer, scripture reading, meditation etc) could be described as activities that one associates with cultivating one's spirituality. People developed and expressed particular spiritual practices in what might be described as formal and informal ways.

Formal spiritual practices are forms of action that are intentionally designed to express and develop a person's or a community's spirituality. These might include such things as prayer, bible study, meditation, celebration of festivals and formal worship within a religious framework.

Informal spiritual practices are also comprised of actions or series of actions that work together in order to cultivate an individual's or a community's spirituality. However, unlike formal spiritual practice, they are not structured by any particular religious tradition, nor are they necessarily intentional. They simply occur as part of day-to-day life. Thus, in this study such things as searching-for-relationships, finding-meaning-in-work, connecting-with-nature and being-in-community take on particular spiritual importance (from the perspective of our participants) even though, when viewed from other perspectives, they may not appear to be explicitly spiritual endeavours.

Religious practices

It was clear that religion remained for many a significant locus for spiritual expression and development. People engaged with religious communities and were clearly nurtured through participating in them and their formal religious practices. Residents in particular identified a number of spiritual practices which were clearly religious in origin - church going, prayer, studying the bible, celebrating seasonal and religious festivals – as primary ways in which they made their spirituality tangible and concrete. However, the meanings of these practices were individualised, with specific meanings being connected to the particular ways in which people processed their beliefs within their lives.

In general, co-workers were less likely to express their spirituality within a traditional religious context than residents. Many of the co-workers with whom we spent time appeared to come from backgrounds wherein they had no formal religious input or who had, for whatever reason, rejected and/or reinterpreted their traditional religious background in the light of anthroposophy. This contrasted in an interesting way with the perspectives of a number of the residents who, in general, did not appear to connect strongly to anthroposophy and its Christian community[1] worship and often appeared comfortable with the traditional Christian religion and worship of their upbringing. This tension may be significant insofar as it may be important for co-workers to recognise that religion forms a significant aspect of the spiritual experience of many residents and that they should be given the opportunities to connect with rituals and forms of worship with which they feel comfortable.

Relationships

A primary informal spiritual practice that people associated strongly with the experience of spirituality was *relationships.* Relationships could be with God/a higher being but more often they were temporal/human. In village

[1] See glossary

communities residents appeared to have a range of relationships with an accompanying strong sense of interconnectedness within the community and beyond it. For many, family ties remained significant. Relationships appeared to function in a spiritual manner insofar as they offered the individual a sense of meaning, hope, purpose, fulfilment and direction in life.

Again, residents in particular tended not to *theorise* about relationships as 'spiritual transactions' but rather to *engage* with them, i.e. they were not perceived as a means to an end but as an end in themselves. Residents explicitly connected relationships with spirituality, finding them contexts which were vital for the expression of their spirituality. For some they were the main means by which their spirituality was expressed. In relationships there was perceived to be a 'meeting of the other' which transcended the physical, psychological and emotional. Through relationships people defined themselves within the context of their past, found meaning in life in the present, unravelled their purpose and found support to continue their life journey with hope. Relationships were the channel through which deep existential questions were asked and answered. Relationships provided:

- A sense of continuity: connecting the past, present and future giving continuity through place and time
- Sense of shared direction and story: a context in which life events were acknowledged and support given
- Identity formation: affirmation of the self, confirmation of self-worth, a firm and recognisable place in the world
- The possibility of intimacy: of knowing and being known, the breaking of isolation, the experiencing of connectedness
- Opportunities for self-development
- A sense of purpose e.g. opportunities for service

Work

Work was another important informal spiritual practice that was seen by some as a specifically spiritual activity. Meaningful work, through which inner

aspirations and ideals could be expressed and even realised, provided and enhanced a sense of meaning and purpose in life. When work was a means of expressing a person's values and ideals, the work, and the individual's perception of their own worth, was enhanced by doing it.

Thus, work provided a sense of meaning, purpose, identity and fulfilment. However, it only seemed to operate in this way if it 'fitted' in some way with the individual's aspirations and/or sense of the work's importance and value to themselves and others/the wider world. The Camphill ethos within which work was seen as done for others and of value no matter what it might be, helped this process of valuing and self-affirmation, particularly within the village communities. Here it was easier for the community itself to determine the value of the work done; i.e. work was given its value by the place accorded to it within the community where work was seen as goal orientated and contributing to the wider good.

It was however less successful in Stourbridge. Here residents in particular sought to be accepted by wider society (including its values and judgements) and to find jobs there. Thus, the meaning and the value of work was quite different in this context. This is not in any sense a value judgement, simply an observation that shows the ways in which spiritual meaning can relate to context rather than object; i.e. work in itself is not necessarily spiritual; it is the particular meanings that people place on it that moves it into the realm of the spiritual. These meanings are closely connected to the context in which people experience work and what values they choose to place upon it.

5. The unseen

Although much of what residents described as relating to spirituality was grounded in day-to-day experiences and practices, there was a keen appreciation amongst all participants that it had also to do with the unseen.

Spirituality had to do with the sense of a higher power/spiritual beings involved in one's life which, at times such as crisis and death, could be evidenced in dramatic ways. People expressed this differently but a sense of 'more than' and 'beyond' yet as real as and also inhabiting/permeating the physical was a unifying theme. For many of residents 'the unseen' was rooted in some sort of religious framework, but often with elements of anthroposophy intermingled, e.g. angels, god, heaven, spiritual world etc. The idea of the individual spirit, which contains the inviolable and eternal essence of the person, was a common theme. This had practical utility for life in the present especially, for some, in making sense of living with their disability. It was also central to the ethos out of which the co-workers related to those they supported.

6. Death, dying and the afterlife

Tied in with the idea of the unseen were various spiritual perspectives on death, dying and the afterlife. This was one of the common areas that residents associated with spirituality, particularly with the 'unseen' element of it. All expressed belief that death is not the end; that there is something more. Precisely how this 'something more' was defined and conceptualised varied. Three main stances emerged:

- Traditional Christian belief: heaven
- Reincarnation: as per anthroposophy
- Uncertainty

However, even within these broad categories it was clear that concepts such as heaven and reincarnation had specific and often highly personalised meanings.

7. Theme of good and evil

It was clear that whilst spirituality was, for many, perceived as a force for good, this was not so for all. One participant's expression of spirituality included strong elements of Satanism and was quite explicit in its rejection of God, religion and the goodness of the spiritual. It was apparent that free-floating spirituality defined in terms of meaning, purpose, hope, transcendence and relationships need not necessarily manifest itself in ways which are inherently good. Without a formal religious or moral framework, it is possible to define the spiritual quest in terms which many would not associate with goodness.

8. Anthroposophy

Anthroposophy, as a conceptual framework within which spirituality was worked out, held relevance for a number of the participants. However, their relationship to it and the degree to which it was taken up varied considerably. Anthroposophy was commonly expressed as central to the spirituality of the co-workers. Elements of it were incorporated by some residents but these tended to be mixed with Judaeo-Christian concepts. Some rejected it, particularly when it conflicted with their religious upbringing. The main concepts expressed were reincarnation, karma and destiny. These ideas had an influence on the caring practices of co-workers and seemed to form a significant aspect of their motivation.

While for some people this anthroposophical perspective proved to be a helpful framework, for others it acted as a barrier insofar as it was perceived to be overly intellectual. There was a further interesting contrast between the idea expressed by some co-workers that anthroposophy was perceived as being beyond the ability of residents to comprehend and the clear understandings of this system that were expressed by some residents. There

may be scope for closer interaction and communication between co-workers and residents around these issues.

Related to anthroposophy, ideas of destiny, karma and reincarnation seemed important aspects of people's spirituality. These concepts were linked together by the participants, although reincarnation and karma were the only ones discussed in detail. They appeared to be concepts which some of the participants found helpful in making sense and finding meaning in some of their life experiences, particularly in the realm of relationships. The idea of karma was seen to play a significant role in relationships, both as an explanation for relationships and also as a way of coping with relationship difficulties. It was perceived that in terms of karma no relationships are 'accidental'; relationships as part of our learning on earth are 'purposeful' and thus are invested with spiritual significance. Further, linking the concepts of karma and reincarnation gave people a sense of continuity throughout lives and provided them with comfort and the possibility of a second chance.

9. Community living

The significance of community living for spiritual well-being varied between communities and individuals. Similarly people's motivations for entering and staying in community were diverse with the common factor, at least amongst co-workers, seeming to be that all considered themselves to be engaged on a 'spiritual path'. Community living offered the possibility of:

- Purposeful living
- Confirmation of place
- Identity
- Meaning
- Vehicle for expressing spirituality
- Opportunities for individual spiritual development

For some of the co-workers community living was identified as a spiritual practice in itself. Community living was that which had brought some into Camphill as a means of furthering their own spiritual journey, rather than the desire to live and work with adults with special needs per se. Thus, for co-workers community living was a means of pursuing their individualised spiritual paths. For residents it did not overtly hold this meaning. It was more the context within which their life was currently unfolding, the place where they chose for that to happen, rather than a vehicle for their spiritual journey per se.

10. Tradition and change

The spirituality of the Camphill communities is shifting and changing. New members of the community have different and more diverse spiritual perspectives than some of their predecessors and there is a sense of spiritual change in all of the communities. This need not be seen as a problem. The developing spiritual diversity is in line with similar spiritual changes that are occurring throughout the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, Camphill faces the challenge of recognising this shift and striving to develop constructive, innovative and creative ways of dealing with the emergent changes. Finding means of supporting, developing and expressing these changing and varied spiritualities in ways that are relevant for today, yet respect the spiritual traditions on which the Camphill communities are built, is a key task for co-workers and residents alike. This may be easier to do in the village communities where the physical boundaries of the community created some spiritual cohesion. In these communities, individuality of spirituality and questioning of spiritual practices may not be such a threat to the integrity of the community. In urban communities such as Stourbridge, where there are no physical boundaries, this may be more complicated as the centre of coherence is much less clear. When these communities are going through periods of change and questioning they are inevitably more vulnerable to crisis and disintegration

This is clearly a time of change and transition. There seems little doubt that spirituality remains a highly significant dimension of the life and experience of residents and co-workers in the Camphill communities. The question is, 'How will the new spiritual culture that is emerging accommodate itself within current structures and assumptions?', or perhaps more importantly, 'Can current structures and assumptions accommodate the changing spirituality of those living and working within the Camphill communities within the United Kingdom?'

Section One: Context and background

Introduction

The importance of spirituality for the process of health and social care is rapidly taking on significance across the disciplines. Recent research has indicated that spirituality is an important dimension of the lives of people with special needs and one which they desire care and support providers to understand, value and take seriously (Swinton & Powrie 2004). Whilst the Camphill communities are in many ways ideally placed to provide for this dimension of care, to date there has been no empirical research that has sought to explore the significance of spirituality for the ethos and practices of these communities. The study from which this report has emerged sought to begin to fill this knowledge gap by presenting data to support (or otherwise) the suggestion that spirituality is important for the people involved with the Camphill Communities and to point towards possible ways in which Camphill's support services could be challenged and improved through reflection on this dimension of people's experience. Through a series of in-depth interviews and focus groups with co-workers and people with special needs[2], the study sought to gain a clear sense of the significance of spirituality - defined in people's own terms - and whether it might form a significant dimension of their lives. We hoped that by listening to people's experiences and trying to understand their spiritual perspectives, we might be able to begin to understand the importance (or otherwise) of this dimension of their lives and start to draw out some of the implications of this for understanding and practice.

What is 'research' and why should Camphill bother with it?

As the idea and relevance of research may not be immediately clear to some readers of this report, it will be helpful from the outset to present an understanding of what research is and how it might be relevant to the work

[2] See glossary for definition of these terms as they apply within the Camphill communities.

of the Camphill communities in the long and the short term. Webster's dictionary describes research in this way. Research is:

> *Studious inquiry or examination; especially: investigation or experimentation aimed at the discovery and interpretation of facts, revision of accepted theories or laws in the light of new facts, or practical application of such new or revised theories or laws.* (Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary, Tenth Edition)

This definition highlights 3 key points that are of important in understanding the significance of this report:

1. Research has to do with *studious inquiry.* It is a scholarly activity designed to explore in depth a particular context or situation with a view to developing deeper and sometimes changed understandings of what is actually going on. In this case, the research was designed to provide a perspective on the role of spirituality within the Camphill communities that was not explicitly available through other means.

2. Research is *discovery and interpretation.* Most of us simply go through our lives without really noticing what is going on. Much of what goes on around us simply passes us by because we rarely take the time to slow down and notice it. The research process is designed, *inter alia,* to enable us to slow down and notice things in new ways. For example, most of us rarely think about our bodies, until something goes wrong with them. Then that which is for the most part unnoticed becomes everything. We suddenly realise how dependant we are on our bodies, how they hold us in the world and how much of our interaction with the world is determined by the shape, texture and function of our bodily aspects. When we notice these things, we begin to see the world slightly differently and encounter it in fresh ways. Research functions in a similar way. As we engage with the methods and perspectives of the research process, we are allowed to see and to develop new understandings of our day-

to-day lives. In this study, the research process enables the reader to have his or her consciousness raised to often hidden aspects of the day-to-day lives of people with special needs and their support workers within the Camphill communities. As the research begins to enable us to reflect thoughtfully on the role of spirituality in the life of Camphill, so we are led to ask new questions: 'What is this thing called 'spirituality' that people say they know so much about but which each of us seem to describe so differently?', 'Is Camphill really providing a context where a person can express their spirituality in ways that are appropriate and more importantly heard?', 'Why might people with special needs enjoy or not enjoy the modes of spiritual care and spiritual practices that are offered?' As we encounter such questions and as we develop new perspectives, so we are challenged and moved to act differently; to reinterpret the way in which we see the world and interact with it.

3. Research challenges us to see the world differently and in seeing things differently, begin to reflect on how we might change our practices in response. As our understanding deepens so our practices should shift and change in rhythm with our expanding knowledge. Research thus opens our minds to possibilities that would not otherwise be available to us and this 'revelation' will inevitably bring us to a place where we have to explore the practical application of our new theory. Contrary to common stereotypes, good research is always action oriented and transformative.

In summary, research helps us to understand our present situation whilst at the same time challenging us to move beyond our current boundaries. It is therefore an invaluable tool for reflection, knowledge development and change.

The Camphill communities

With these thoughts in mind, let us now turn our attention to the context of the study: the Camphill communities. Camphill is a worldwide movement, with over 100 communities in 23 countries supporting people of all ages with special needs. In these communities, volunteer co-workers and people with special need live, learn and work together. The 50 Camphill communities in the UK and Ireland include schools, colleges and adult communities. Each community is different. Some are large; some are small. Some are in towns and cities; some are in quiet rural areas; some are on the urban interface where town meets country. Some are independent charities; some are part of larger charities. All are caring, life-sharing communities, where the contribution made to community life by each person is valued. Everyone is appreciated for who they are, for their unique personality and the special qualities they bring to community life. The Camphill philosophy is that no matter what anyone's outward disability may appear to be, the spirit - the essential core that makes us all human - always remains whole. Therefore, everyone is deserving of equal respect and opportunities in life so that all may be able to fulfill their potential. Artistic and cultural themes run through the daily lives of all the communities where life is based on Christian values and inspired by the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner, known as anthroposophy[3].

The impetus for the study

The impetus for the study came from recent research on spirituality and mental health (Swinton 2000; 2001) and spirituality and learning disabilities (Swinton & Powrie 2004; Swinton 2002) carried out by Professor John Swinton at the University of Aberdeen's Centre for Spirituality, Health and Disability. These studies have indicated that spirituality is a significant aspect within the lives of many people with special needs. This research found that:

- The quality of life for people with special needs was improved by a focus on the spiritual dimensions of their experiences.

[3] www.camphill.org.uk

- Spirituality was considered to be a significant aspect within the lives of many people with special needs.
- For some, spirituality was expressed in religious terms. For others, the search for meaning, hope, purpose, love and relationship was worked out in a wide variety of ways including: relationships with others, a relationship with nature, the use of creativity, art, friendship and community.
- Spiritually oriented communities were found to be a potentially valuable source of support and integration.
- The meeting of spiritual needs was a reciprocal process. That is, support workers had as much to learn from people with special needs about spirituality as they had to teach them.

The current study sought to build on this foundation within the particular context of the Camphill communities.

Aberdeen City bypass

The study was initiated in response to the proposal that part of a new Aberdeen city bypass road - the Murtle option for the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) - should be constructed to run between two of the Camphill communities in Aberdeen; Newton Dee Village for adults and Camphill Rudolf Steiner Schools' (Murtle campus) for children. The study was one of a cluster of research projects designed to explore whether or not the bypass would affect the quality of life of people living and working in these two Camphill communities. The intention at that stage was to explore whether spirituality was significant for those living and working in Camphill Aberdeen and whether or not the disruption caused by the bypass might impact negatively on this aspect of people's experience.

However, after the study commenced, the news came through that the bypass had been re-routed and would not now affect the communities that were the focus of the research. At that stage, it was decided to continue the

project with a broader remit and expand it to include two more Camphill communities, at Stourbridge and Botton. By reflecting on these three communities, it was hoped that we might gain a deeper and richer picture of the role of spirituality in the Camphill communities.

We do not claim that the findings we present in this report are representative of all Camphill communities in the various forms in which they exist. We do, however, believe that the experiences of the people captured in this research report will resonate with the experience of others and that this resonance, if used thoughtfully and creatively, might have transformative power.

Why bother with spirituality?

The significance of suggesting that it might be a useful and fruitful idea to explore the importance of spirituality within the Camphill communities may not immediately seem apparent. True, Camphill does have a history of involvement with spirituality and indeed, it could be argued that spirituality forms the core of what the Camphill communities are about. And yet, a wider reflection on the religious landscape of the United Kingdom would indicate that religion is an aspect of human experience in which our culture seems to be becoming less and less interested. In line with much of Western Europe, there is a significant decrease in adherence to traditional, formal, institutional religion (Davie 1994). The diminishing number of people regularly attending places of worship evidences this.[4] However, it has been noted that, whilst traditional religion *appears* to be in decline, there is a corresponding *increase* in the number of people expressing the importance of what they describe as 'spirituality' for their lives and claiming to have spiritual experiences and

[4] Scottish Church Census 2002
http://www.scottishchristian.com/features/0305census01.shtml
It should be pointed out that it is only certain forms of traditional religion that are in decline. Evangelical Christianity, for example, seems to be on the increase rather than in decline. Likewise other traditional religions such as Islam are also increasing. It would appear to be the form rather than the context of traditional religion that is failing to resonate with contemporary postmodern society. As we shall see, this was reflected in interesting ways by our participants.

beliefs (Hay and Hunt 2000). Spirituality appears to have migrated from the overtly religious towards a more individualistic and subjective quest that has no necessity for formal structure, doctrinal beliefs or an anchoring community of like-minded believers (Woodhead & Heelas 2005). People now seem to want to *believe* in things spiritual, but no longer wish to *belong* to traditional religious institutions (Davie 1994). This is *not* to say that religion is unimportant. It remains highly significant for many people and will be seen to be so for many of our participants. The point is that the meaning of the term 'spiritual' is shifting and changing within contemporary British culture.

What do we mean by 'spirituality'?

In understanding what people mean by the term 'spirituality', it is helpful to distinguish between 'religiousness' and 'spirituality' as commonly defined.

Religiousness is defined as participation in the particular beliefs, formal rituals and activities of traditional religion. Religion is a particular way in which people may express their spirituality but, according to common assumption within western cultures, it is not necessarily synonymous with it[5].

Spirituality is a subjective experience that exists both within and outside traditional religious systems. Spirituality relates to the way in which people understand and live their lives in view of their sense of ultimate meaning and value. It includes the need to find satisfactory answers to ultimate questions about the meaning of life, illness and death. It can be seen as comprising elements of meaning, purpose, value, hope, love and, for some people, a connection to a higher power or something greater than self. Spirituality is, therefore, much more of a personal and social construction than religion, although both contain constructed elements.

[5] It is useful to notice that this separation of religion from spirituality is a relatively recent Western phenomenon. People from other cultures, and even within Western culture, may well not recognise this split; for many religion *is* spirituality and religion is a way of life that cannot be separated into beliefs and practices. For the purposes of this report we will be accepting the religion/spirituality split as it is articulated by our participants.

One of the intentions of the study was to listen to how the people living and working within the Camphill communities understood and constructed the term 'spirituality' and to explore the ways in which this understanding impacted upon their lives together. An important thing to bear in mind as one reads the accounts of spirituality and spiritual experience outlined in this report is that our focus is on how people define and describe spirituality and its significance for their lives. Throughout we make no judgements as to whether a person's understanding is right or wrong or whether the 'thing' described as 'spirituality' actually exists in any kind of empirically verifiable way. The pattern throughout this study was to allow people to construct spirituality in their own words and on their own terms. Our task was to endeavour to capture, interpret and present these understandings as accurately and sensitively as possible.

Section Two: Aims, goals and methods

The aim of the study

The study aimed to explore the significance of spirituality for those living and working within three Camphill communities in the United Kingdom.

We originally focused on three main research questions:

1. How do those living and working within the Camphill communities understand the meaning and significance of spirituality for their lives and practices?
2. Is there anything unique about the Camphill's environment or/and philosophy which helps to sustain a sense of spiritual well-being?
3. What is the potential impact of the AWPR on this aspect of quality of life?

As already outlined, the third question was discontinued due to a change regarding the route of the Aberdeen City bypass.

The goals of the study

In essence, the study sought to achieve the following goals:

1. To provide an in-depth analysis on how people living and working within three Camphill communities perceive the role of spirituality.

2. To provide evidence as to whether or not the claims made by Camphill regarding the importance of the spiritual aspects of community life have some veracity and practical utility for people with special needs and those living alongside them

3. To produce research data with which the Camphill communities might be enabled to contribute to the discussion on how to meet the spiritual needs of people with special needs and their support workers.

4. To provide evidence that there is freedom of expression of spirituality (or otherwise) within the Camphill communities

5. To provide information to help evidence the ways in which Camphill is located within the spectrum of provision for people with special needs and whether it offers something that is unique and valued by people with special needs.

Methodological location of the study

The study originally planned to use a mixed method with insights being drawn from both quantitative and qualitative research methods. However, after working with the 'Spiritual Involvement and Beliefs Scale' (Hatch et al 1998) in Aberdeen, there were indications of difficulties associated with this method of data gathering within the Camphill community. It was clear that some people found the questionnaire inappropriate and intrusive, with a number of participants expressing concern that this was not the way that they felt their spirituality could or should be represented. However, we followed through with the questionnaire for the co-workers in Aberdeen. The results of this are presented in Appendix 1. When we encountered some of the same issues in Botton and Stourbridge, we decided that this element was inappropriate and that our time might be better spent focusing on the qualitative approach, a style and method which participants universally thought was more appropriate. We therefore shifted the study into a purely qualitative approach, which clearly met the needs of the research more effectively than the quantitative approach we had originally decided to use in combination.

Participatory research

The general orientation of the study finds it locus within the emerging perspective of participatory research. Participatory research is a mode of researching that attempts to do research *with* rather than *on* participants.

This general approach is of particular importance when dealing with people who are vulnerable or whose voice has previously been subsumed due to various power dynamics at both the interpersonal and the socio-political levels.

A participatory approach to research seeks, as far as is possible, to include people as co-researchers within the research process. In relation to people with disabilities, participatory research has developed within two primary methodological traditions: *participatory* and *emancipatory* research (Walmsley 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005; Rioux & Bach 1994). Broadly speaking, participatory research differs from emancipatory research in the amount of control given to participants. Participatory research refers to those projects where people (in particular, for current purposes, people with special needs), are involved in research production in all stages from definition of the problem to disseminating the results (Walmsley 2003). Again, Walmsley argues that participatory research occurs when researchers work 'alongside people with special needs as allies' (2004). The aim of such research is to facilitate as much involvement as possible for people with special needs in the research process, but with overall control and responsibility maintained by the researcher who remains accountable to the funding body. It is this general approach that underpins this study.

Emancipatory research, which some argue is poorly understood and used interchangeably with participatory research differs in that disabled people themselves control the agenda (Walmsley 2004). It is a method designed 'to heighten political awareness and to lead to radical social change' (Walmsley 2003). The researcher's expertise is placed at the disposal of people with disabilities - it is *their* project. This brings about a fundamental shift in the relationship between the researcher and the researched, with a great emphasis on empowerment and change.

Whilst they differ in important ways, both participatory and emancipatory methods share three core beliefs:

- an emphasis on the 'essential inequality' of research where people with special needs are simply 'researched' as objects;
- the right of people to be consulted about and involved in research that has an effect on their lives;
- the improvement in the quality of research that involves people with special needs.

The overall goal of participatory research is that people with special needs have a voice and some degree of participation in events that affect their lives. Research done from this perspective is geared towards providing some degree of benefit to the participants involved. Thus, the question of who will or should benefit from the research is critical (Northway 2000). Traditional modes of researching disability have focused on quantitative research, which is primarily of benefit to the researcher and the funding body. Participatory research 'should result in something of worth to the participants', whether it be social change, increased empowerment, awareness, confidence and understanding, etc. In addition, there is a greater need for reflexivity within participatory research (Northway 2000), that is, 'self-reflection from the researcher' (Walmsley 2003). Reflexivity is the ability of the researcher to examine his or her motives, values and prejudices when doing a particular study and to make them explicit - that is, if 'an honest account of the research is to be provided' (Northway 2000). This is critical in any participatory research study, but particularly where the needs of people with special needs are to be addressed. With this in mind, we designed the study to incorporate an ethos of participation and considered all participants to be active co-researchers who retained ownership of the process and direction of the study throughout.

Qualitative research methods

The current study is defined as qualitative, depending heavily on the qualitative data and observations received from the participants. Quantitative data is generally reduced to numbers - that which can be quantified or measured (Babbie 1995). Qualitative research focuses on 'observations not easily reduced to numbers' or that which can't easily be measured (Babbie 1995). Walmsley defines it as research which 'seeks to understand and interpret how the world is seen by others. It attempts to answer the question: 'What is going on here?' (Walmsley 2003). Qualitative research tends to be more interested in the quality of interactions with, and observations of, those researched. It is therefore less concerned with numbers than with insight into the dynamics and intricacies of a group of people. Qualitative methodologies are 'concerned with understanding the meaning of phenomena.' This being so, methods are necessarily flexible and somewhat unstructured. This has also been called a phenomenological approach. Due to the nature of the subject matter – spirituality – and the difficulties in quantifying this aspect of human experiences, this general approach has been deemed the most appropriate.

Qualitative research methods: In-depth interviews and focus groups

<u>In-depth interviews</u>

One of the initial difficulties we encountered was how to communicate the word spirituality to participants within a cultural context where the meaning of the word has become so diverse and fluid. If people were to be given a genuine opportunity to reflect on their spirituality we decided it would be necessary to create basic conceptual parameters within which we could begin to explore the areas that previous research had suggested constituted the 'spiritual dimension'. These parameters were always left open to be challenged and developed by the experiences and feelings of participants and, as we shall see, they did just that. Nevertheless, we needed to define a framework within which the interviews could take

place. To this end we developed an interview schedule based on the findings of previous research consisting of the following questions:

1. What is spirituality?
2. What makes you feel good about yourself? (value)
3. What are the good parts of your life? (meaning)
4. Are friends important to you? Why? (connectedness/relationships)
5. What do you want to do with your life? (hope)
6. What helps when life is difficult?
7. Do you think there is a God? (searching for the transcendent)
8. Why do you think you are in the world? (existential search for identity and purpose)

These questions opened up some fascinating areas of discussion and reflection. Question 1 enabled us to explore what the word spirituality actually meant for people. The following questions enabled us to test and deepen our understanding of the responses to question 1. For people who had no expressed idea of spirituality as a formal concept, the questions allowed the researcher to explore those dimensions of human experience that have been recognised as within the boundaries of 'the spiritual' and to examine what they meant for different individuals.

Focus groups

Our second mode of data collection was via focus groups. The main advantage of focus groups is that they not only allow the researcher to gather a large amount of data in a relatively short period of time, but they also allow 'direct access to the language and concepts which structure participants' experiences.' (McLafferty 2004). In particular, the planned and structured focus groups provide a valuable strategy that offers participants the opportunity to make their views known in ways that are open and safe. The dynamics generated within focus groups can help participants gain confidence, create a safe, non-threatening and non-intimidating environment

for discussion and provide strong peer support, which can enable participation by people who might otherwise be excluded due to problems with articulation. They are therefore potentially of value in achieving the participatory goals of the study (Swinton & Mowat 2006).

Validity

An issue to consider was the validity of group data generated. Having sessions recorded and transcribed provided one possible safeguard against contamination and misinterpretation. Cross-referencing information from co-workers was another method we used, although we recognised that the use of triangulation has been critiqued heavily by disability advocates (Booth & Booth 1996). If we allow people with special needs to speak for themselves where they can, as indeed we must, we need also to accept that there will be some degree of misinterpretation from the researcher. To deal with this we constantly checked and re-checked information received against the original participants' to make sure we have 'gotten it right'. This combined with the research team's mutual checking and challenging of interpretations and interpretative processes enabled us to be reassured that the study was rigorous.

The significance of fragments

Before moving on to examine the results, it is worth commenting on an aspect of research with people who have special needs which has been encountered in previous studies but which emerged again here. One of the challenges that we faced, particularly in our conversations with people who have special needs, was that there was a clear tension between the word-based social scientific methods that we had chosen for this study and the sometimes limited level of articulation of many of the people with special needs. This methodological problem within word-based social scientific methods when used to do research with people who have special needs has been recognised by researchers in other contexts. In response to this, as we have reflected on, analysed and interpreted the data given to us by adults

with special needs, we have taken seriously *the significance of fragments*, (Swinton & Mowat 2006). That is, within a research context with people who have limited skills of articulation, the researcher *must* take seriously the importance of the fragments of truth that people offer**.** Whereas standard research methods demand extended articulation of salient points, experience has taught us that there is often poignant and deep meaning to be found in verbal expressions which, whilst not extended, are nonetheless extremely important and meaningful. Thus, taking seriously the small fragments of truth that people expressed to us and exploring them within the context of the culture of the Camphill communities and the shared meanings expressed within the interviews and focus groups was an important dimension of the analytical process. We were constantly aware that words, sentences and gestures, contained quite specific meanings that were often clear to the group which had its embodied history within Camphill, but which could easily be obscured from the researcher who lives out a different history, in a different context, with a different understanding.

How we structured the report

It is important from the start for the reader to be aware of how we have structured the report and why we have done so. This report contains data from our conversations with three Camphill communities. What we have tried to do is to present the accounts of spirituality which people shared with us accurately and clearly. Our analysis and interpretation has been focused on, and carried out with, the specific intention of providing the reader with an in-depth understanding of the role and function of spirituality within these communities. Inevitably, there was a good deal of overlap between the various themes and perspectives that emerged from our interviews and focus groups in the different communities. There were certain key experiences that all of our participants had in terms of religion, relationships, community and so forth. However, there were also subtle but important differences in the

ways individuals and communities understood and worked with these common themes.

In structuring this report, we have tried to offer a rich and deep insight into some of the nuances of these similarities and differences, although not through formal comparison, which would be a contradiction of our methodological assumptions that people's experience is unique and not generalisable. Rather, we have tried to lay out people's experiences in such a way as to enable the reader to understand and reflect on that which is common and that which is different, or even dissonant, between the communities. As the reader immerses herself in the material and reflects on, and interacts with, our interpretations, she should be able to gain a deep understanding into the nature of spirituality and the role and function that it plays within these communities and beyond. In this way the descriptive data we offer here might find modes of operationalisation as it encounters the world in which the reader lives, works and practices her own spirituality. In the concluding chapter, we offer some reflective conclusions which we hope will be of value to each community and to those reading this report from outside the Camphill communities.

Section Three: Spirituality in the Aberdeen Camphill Communities

Part 1: About the Aberdeen Camphill Communities

Camphill Aberdeen[6] comprises a set of five communities of varying sizes, located six miles west of Aberdeen City centre. These five different and independently operated communities spread out over hundreds of acres along the Dee valley. Whilst physically separate these communities are joined together in purpose and ethos with over 68 years of locational and philosophical heritage. The original Camphill community was founded in this area in 1940 on Camphill Estate, by Dr Karl König and a group of pioneers - all refugees from the Nazi regime - who were seeking to find a new way of living and working with special needs children. Today in the five Aberdeen communities around 700 people live and work.

Newton Dee Community

Newton Dee, a village community supporting adults who have special needs, is one of the Camphill Aberdeen communities. Situated in the local community of Bieldside on the western edge of Aberdeen city, Newton Dee straddles a semi-rural, semi-suburban setting which offers relative peace and shelter to residents, whilst allowing access to cultural, social and economic aspects of the city. Its grounds cover some 180 acres, 120 of which are given over to biodynamic farming, yet its immediate proximity to the amenities of the local community and ease of access to Aberdeen promote integration in the life of the city and the wider community.

A well-established Camphill community, Newton Dee includes and integrates adults with special needs into its life, work and management. It provides home life, work, training/educational opportunities, social interaction, cultural

[6] For further information see: www.camphillaberdeen.org.uk

and spiritual inspiration for around 200 people, half of whom have special needs. The others are co-workers and their families, short-term volunteers and employees. Newton Dee also offers day work placements to adults with special needs who live outside the village.

Home life

The community offers various options for supported living to meet individual needs and choice. These include shared living with co-workers and their families in extended households of varying sizes and more independent living in houses, flats or bedsitters on-site, with support close at hand. Many residents have lived a large part of their adult life in Newton Dee and to accommodate their needs as they age there is a household providing a higher level of personal care and support.

Work life

Purposeful work producing quality goods and services is a key part of Newton Dee life. A range of enterprises on site provides a variety of work opportunities, along with appropriate training and support.

The organic/biodynamic farm enterprises rear a variety of livestock, producing food for Newton Dee and the surrounding Camphill communities. The market gardens grow vegetables, fruit, flowers and herbs both for the community use and for sale in the store. Workshops and studios produce hand-crafted goods including furniture, toys, copper work and other metal items. These are outlet locally in the gift shop and worldwide through a central distribution at Botton Village. There is a bakery, café, store and gift shop, all of which provide work opportunities and, being well-known in the area, also offer points of interaction between Newton Dee residents and the wider community.

Amenities

In addition to the bakery, café, store and gift shop, amenities on-site include a large village hall and a chapel. The hall is a well-used venue for a wide variety of cultural and social activities within the community. It also hosts public performances by various groups and the annual local arts festival. The chapel, where non-denominational acts of worship are held throughout the week and on a Sunday, also provides a meeting space for cultural and educational groups. Within walking distance in the local community there are churches, a pub/restaurant and general store.

Social, cultural and spiritual life

The community has an active social and cultural calendar, including events relating to the celebration of the Christian festivals. Participation in a wide range of activities, both in and outside the community, is encouraged. The surrounding countryside proved scope for outdoor pursuits. Holidays at home and abroad with family or friends from Newton Dee are also a regular feature of community life.

The Aberdeen study involved 16 people with special needs and 22 co-workers/employees in the context of 6 focus groups. The work was carried out by Ms. Stephanie Brock and analysed in collaboration with Professor John Swinton.

Part 2: Thematic Reflections on the Spirituality of Newton Dee Residents

Spirituality

One of the things that we discovered quite early on in the study was that the understandings of spirituality expressed by the residents were not conceptual or esoteric, but rather tended to be concrete, practical and rooted in the everydayness of people's lives. Spirituality was understood in terms of tangible things such as work, relationships, community and nature, all things which tended to be immediate and physically accessible to the senses. People tended not to be interested in the minutiae of formal religious systems or modes of religious practice. Indeed, for some formal ideas of God, prayer, meditation and so forth were clearly expressed as *not* being part of their understanding of what spirituality meant for their lives. For others, religion and formal religious practices were important. However, on the whole, residents tended not to express their understanding of spirituality in terms of formal belief structures, although more abstract (informal) ideas surrounding such things as death, the afterlife and spiritual beings did form a dimension of some people's experiences of the spiritual. The following captures something of this dynamic:

Interviewer*: OK, so when I say the word, spirituality, what things come to mind?*
Derek*: Maybe going to church sometimes.*
Fiona*: Work, leisure time, meetings.*
Derek*: Like today's meeting*
Fiona*: Activity groups, school of learning,*
Grace*: It's talking about things that you can't see*
Daniel*: Like beliefs and things. You can have them, but you can't actually physically see them*

Derek*: Sometimes there can…, you can have visions sometimes. Lots of people have had visions in this community.*

We might summarise the resident's perceptions of spirituality thus: spirituality relates to a series of identifiable practices that may well have deeper conceptual meaning, but which are not primarily conceived of, or articulated, in that way. As we shall see, even the supernatural elements of people's spiritual experience that were identified were not understood as simply dislocated experiences; rather they found their expression as they were grounded within particular contexts and practical situations. The general spiritual orientation of the residents could be summed up thus: *the idea of spirituality related to a series of tasks and experiences that had practical utility. These often involved, but were not defined by an understanding of the supernatural or/and the Holy.*

Spirituality or spiritual well-being?

This observation led us to consider that there might be an important difference between spirituality (understood as a formal and definable concept) and spiritual well-being (understood as the outcome of engagement with the beliefs and practices that emerge from a person's spirituality). It seemed that in responding to the more esoteric question of what spirituality is, the residents, focused upon those concrete practices which enabled them to gain a sense of spiritual well-being. Their interest was in the practical implications of spirituality and spiritual practices rather than any sort of formal definition of what spirituality might mean conceptually. Reflecting on our encounters with the residents, we were led to conclude that *spirituality* might be understood as a general term for those aspects of a person's belief system that contributed to a sense of meaning or purpose in life. Those aspects included, but were not limited to:

- one's relationships

- beliefs about or in God or gods/higher power/angels/cosmic energy etc, i.e. whatever name one gives to the beings, powers or experiences which 'help one out' in life and/or provide a source of motivation or inclination to do things.
- a person's sense of that which is behind, beyond and supporting the more material things in life.

Spirituality thus understood is the foundation for spiritual practices. The practices that emerge from a person's spirituality reflect, implicitly or explicitly, the underlying structures of their spirituality. Although they were often not explicit about what their conception of spirituality was, for the residents their various spiritual practices implicitly indicated particular modes of spirituality. The fact that this spirituality was not explicitly described to us in the way that, for example, the co-workers and employees expressed their understandings of spirituality, should therefore not be interpreted as indicative of a lack of spirituality. It simply means that we have to be prepared to 'read' and interpret people's practices with an openness to the possibility of the spiritual being significant. This was a common pattern in all of the communities we worked with and is in line with the methodological reflections on the construction of spirituality outlined in the introduction to this report.

Spiritual well-being differs from spirituality in the sense that it is the end result of how well one's spirituality has functioned in terms of facilitating meaning, purpose, hope, relationship and so forth. One may use many different ways and modes to achieve such well-being – prayer, meditation, Scripture, work, community, relationships and so forth – but such things are primarily practical tools designed to facilitate the search for meaning and, in some cases, contact with the Divine and a movement towards a sense of wholeness and connectedness.

Whilst the co-workers tended to reflect on spirituality alongside spiritual well-being, the residents primarily related to the experiential aspects of spirituality. It should be emphasised that this is not to suggest that they had no knowledge or interest in spirituality in its more formal sense. They may well have. They may simply not have felt the need to articulate it during the focus groups. The important thing for current purposes is that it was the various concrete practices which led to spiritual well-being (rather than reflection on the nature or origin of these practice) that were of primary concern to the residents when reflecting on the spiritual dimension of their lives. With this understanding of spirituality and spiritual well-being in mind, we can now move on to explore the key themes that emerged around the resident's understandings of the spiritual dimension of their lives.

Routine and rhythm

A recurring theme which emerged in our discussions was the significance of routine and rhythm. This general theme held together some important sub-themes such as work, choice and control, all of which participants acknowledged as within the realm of the spiritual. It was clear that the everyday routines of eating meals together, working, meeting together and the familiar rhythms of community life were important to the residents and were highlighted as significant dimensions of their spiritual well-being. These familiar routines and rhythms enabled them to know and to predict what they were doing on any given day of the week, from week to week and from month to month. This seemed to provide people with a sense of security and place in the world. This predictability should not be misinterpreted as immovable or pointless routine. It could incorporate change and had some degree of flexibility as is clear from the resident's willingness to break with routine and engage in the focus groups. Nevertheless, routine and predictability did lead to a sense of peace and security which was deemed spiritually significant.

Within this general routine and rhythm, the major, more communally oriented ritual events such as Advent, Christmas and Easter played a significant part in people's lives. Anticipating these events provided both a wider marking point for the movement of their lives and an overarching meta-rhythm which offered a source of excitement and anticipation and a goal for some significant activities.

Control and choice

While routine and rhythm were deemed to be important in terms of providing security and a sense of personal place, it would be a mistake to assume that this was indicative of mindless habituation or placid conformity to an externally imposed routine. The residents highlighted *choice* as both significant and problematic. People expressed the importance of being able to make their own decisions about what they wanted to do and how they wanted to do it:

Interviewer*: So life is about choices?*
Paul*: yeah, choices.*
David*: I'm learning now to really* [choose] *what I want to do or what I don't do I stick to it…I know some people think I'm mean, but it's not aggressive. I think it's a bit… you can feel paranoid, and I don't know…*
Interviewer*: Is it difficult to make choices?*
Paul*: Sometimes it can be difficult, you know, yeah, I mean you can't be in two places, you know…*
David*: In making choices, sometimes you say to yourself, what are you going to cook for supper tonight, and you…have to have a think about what you're going to cook. When you live on your own like I do, and I think: 'What am I going to cook!?' And I have to make up my mind, I suppose you have the same problem, you have to think what are you going to cook for tomorrow's dinner or today's dinner?*

The freedom to make decisions was important to people, but the process of actually making decisions, choosing between various options and making the right decisions could be problematic. Many of the things they wanted to do seemed difficult, and, at times, presented a real dilemma for people. Decisions and making choices was hard, but it was highlighted as an important part of living in community. Community living meant making some decisions and recognising that you can't make other decisions:

You've got to realise some people don't have choices, cause they feel in a situation you must do this or you must do that, but there's always ways of getting round it. You compromise, you know.

This is quite a profound statement. At the heart of community life (and indeed of spiritual life) is the ability to find freedom to relate with self, God and others. One of the real dangers of living in close community is that to maintain 'order', either each member of the community is forced to conform to the lowest common denominator or the stronger members of the community overpower the weaker members. In either case, there is a real danger that the identity of the weaker members collapses into the identity of the stronger. This danger is particularly acute when building community with people who are in whatever way vulnerable to such negative power dynamics. However, it was clear that many of the residents with whom we spoke had a clear sense of their own identity and at least a desire to ensure that their identity was sustained by the rhythms and routines of community life rather than being subsumed by the needs of 'the community.' The suggestion implied in the above quotation, that choice and freedom to make choices requires a corollary in a willingness to compromise, is an important dimension of community living and one which residents seemed sharply aware of.

Work

An important aspect of the rhythm and routine of the Camphill communities relates to the work that all are engaged in. A number of residents highlighted work as a specifically spiritual activity. Work seemed to offer people a strong sense of spiritual well-being insofar as it provided them with a sense of meaning, purpose, identity and fulfilment.

Interviewer*: Several people mentioned work. Do you all like work?*

Group*: yes, nods.*

Interviewer*: What sort of work?*

Lorraine*: Well I work in two houses, and one in the morning and one in the afternoon. And I clean and wash up.*

David*: Well I work in the store, weighing up, and on Tuesday's and Thursday's I work in the doll shop.*

Frank*: I work at the estate in the morning from 9 until 12.*

Stewart*: If it's permissible, we just work in summer hours as we always work in, like in summer holiday we had um planting bulbs if it's very nice, planting bulbs, and if it's horrible we just are outside there.*

Interviewer*: So that's planting in the garden?*

Stewart*: Yeah, work in the garden.*

On reflection, this emphasis on work as a dimension of spirituality does make some sense both in secular and in religious terms. The resident's clear identification of work with spiritual well-being finds further support in the growing body of literature which suggests that for some people their employment in a real sense provides them with spiritual fulfilment. Work provides meaning to a person's life and offers them purpose, social status and a positive sense of value, identity and citizenship. Within a capitalist system wherein social status and worth are often judged by one's ability to participate in the labour market, work takes on dimensions of social and spiritual significance that are often overlooked.

Similarly, within the Christian religion, work is closely connected to both spirituality and to what it means to be human. There is for example, a close connection between work and the image of God in human beings:

> *Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." ...God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day* (Genesis 1:26-28, 31).

According to this passage, work is at least a dimension of what it means to be a human being who is made in God's image. Thus, both at a religious and a non-religious level, work can be understood as a deeply spiritual activity. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that this connection was perceived by the residents as part of their spiritual well-being.

Nature

Perhaps because of the community's geographical location, the land based nature of the community and the type of work that is offered, the resident's work also drew them into contact with another self-identified aspect of their spiritual well-being: *nature*. For some of the residents, the encounter with nature, and the consequent sense of recognition and appreciation of the world, formed an important dimension of their spiritual well-being:

> **Interviewer***: Does everyone get a chance…to work out in the garden?*
> **Group***: nods*
> **Frank***: Farm.*

Interviewer*: On the farm?*

Frank*: Yeah, three hours a week, on a Wednesday.*

Interviewer*: Is that something that is nice to do, to be out on the farm, or in the garden?*

Frank*: Yeah.*

Interviewer*:…how important to you is it to be outside? … to interact with nature?*

John*: Well it's very important, you know, it's part of the philosophy of the place, it's so important. It's also a great opportunity to relax within yourself and take stock of what's going on. You get to look at creation and the end product. It's rewarding.*

Such recognition of the importance of a sense of connection with nature for spiritual well-being is in line with other studies that have highlighted a connectedness with nature as being an important dimension of spiritual well-being (Swinton & Powrie 2004). This observation also begins to highlight a way in which the internal routines and rhythms of the Camphill communities may find a wider resonance with the routines and rhythms of nature. This wider perspective on routine and rhythm was, as we shall see later, more fully articulated by the co-workers, but resonances of the potential significance of this dimension of the life of Camphill emerged in various ways during our conversations with the residents. We might speculate that the physical locality of the Camphill communities with their emphasis on space, nature and community combined with an appreciation of meaningful work, would be places where spiritual well-being was enhanced in important ways. In other words, there are indications that the geographical location and the specifics of the ethos and environment of the communities may be important for the spiritual well-being of those who live there.

Searching for peace

A second significant theme which came to prominence and which seemed to form an important aspect of the resident's sense of spiritual well-being was the need and the search for peace. People frequently talked about the importance of having time to be quiet, to be at peace, to be left alone; time to do what they wanted by themselves:

I think it is nice to come and relax at the end of the day's work and just come … around the table …, you know, talking and giving us the thoughts, you know, round the table, and I think it's peaceful, you know, when you've had a day's work and you just want to wind down.

Everyone seemed to value this idea. While the means of taking quiet time varied - listening to music, walking along the Deeside walkway, working in the garden, reading a book sitting in a room and looking out the window - all participants seemed to relate to a need for peace, personal space (physical and psychological) and an opportunity to let their bodies wind down and rest:

Interviewer*: what is the best part of your day?*
Mary*: … what is yours indeed?*
Interviewer (smiles)*: I'm curious about what is yours!*
Mary*: when you go to bed at night and you unwind.*
Jane*: unwind, yes.*
Mary*: that's peaceful. Or if you're sitting peacefully on your own at home.*
Jane*: just let your body wind down.*

The search for peace required the provision of space within which such peace could be experienced and enjoyed. This required a process of *distancing* and *disengaging* from certain forms of relationships in a way that presents an interesting dissonance with the desire for relationship and community that formed the heart of all of the participants understanding of spiritual well-being:

some people can be with people all the time, but me, I need space in between, you know. I guess people don't understand, [they] *say you're lazy cause you don't want to take part. Well that's just cause they don't understand. That's why we're all here cause we have to understand each other.*

As with our previous observations on the need for compromise in community development, similarly here we find the idea that spiritual well-being requires compromise and mutual understanding. But here it is given a slightly difference emphasis. Withdrawing from relationship in search of inner peace is important, but clearly can be misconstrued by those whom, at other times, one seeks to relate with. Community requires perseverance, compromise and understanding. Spiritual well-being requires withdrawal as well as interaction:

Interviewer*: So you've mentioned personal space, and a few people have mentioned relaxing and space. So … if we called that quiet time or personal space…?*
Mary*: I usually say to myself I'm going to have some quiet time. I've got a little house of my own which is not far from here and sometimes I like to go there and shut myself off or do a jigsaw puzzle to get myself relaxed.*
Interviewer*: Is that something that you feel like you need? Is that important to spiritual well-being…?*
Group*: yes*

People found these 'holy spaces' in various locations:

Interviewer: *What places…where do you go to find peace?*
David*: on the railway, walking on the railway.[Old Deeside Railway walkway]*
Jean: *in my bedroom.*

Mary*: Sometimes I sit in my room on a chair and listen to a CD, look out the window, when it's dark it's not…*

Interviewer*: Listening to music, is that something that you all…?*

Group*: yes, nods…*

David*: listening to the radio…(general muttering)*

Jean*: or you can always go down to the river, sit down there and be quiet…*

David*: or you can read a book, that's also something.*

Malcolm*: or you can sort of look outside into the garden for a bit, just…*

In line with this aspect of people's experiences of spiritual well-being, it is worth noting that the only time the groups reflected fear and/or anxiety was when discussion of the bypass, the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR), and impending change to their community arose[7] (i.e. a clear breach in routine and rhythm and the potential destruction of their peace and 'sacred spaces'). Participants at both of the resident groups highlighted their concerns over the AWPR. This clearly represented a significant point of stress for them. They expressed concerns about noise and disturbance to their routines, especially their patterns of relaxation, as well as the potential loss of their freedom (presumably to go where they want when they want to) and peace. It was not however entirely clear whether the road potentially impacting their community was the true stress or if the *idea* of the road impacting their community was more difficult for them to envision and therefore more threatening. In other words, they may well have more ability to cope with major changes when faced with them in reality rather than in imagination. Either way, their concerned response indicated the importance of space, peace, routine and so forth for their spiritual well-being and the reality that changes in the Newton Dee community as a result of the AWPR could have a significantly negative effect on their spiritual well-being.

[7] As mentioned in the introduction, the potential threat posed to the Aberdeen Camphill communities by the passage of the AWPR between the Newton Dee and Murtle communities was the original impetus for the study. Although the threat was later lifted, talk of this bypass, and the Save Camphill campaign against this routing of the road being run by Camphill and in which a number of the residents were involved, dominated much of the thought of the residents at that time,as reflected by some of their comments.

Closely connected to the theme of peace and to some extend following on from the previous comment on the anxiety caused by the threat of the impending bypass, was the need to develop constructive ways of dealing with conflict, stress and change. This was not a major theme, but it seems nonetheless worthy of noting in the light of the previous reflections on the importance of peace for spiritual well-being. Several participants said they keep their stress and anxiety to themselves and that they 'don't say much about it' to anyone. This could mean either that they know there isn't much to be done about that particular issue (e.g. the AWPR), or that they have not been given the opportunity to gain the skills which would enable them to tackle problematic issues in a constructive and healing manner. There were clearly potential support structures in place and residents felt that there were people, such as co-workers, with whom they had a relationship of trust and who they were able to approach about such issues. Nevertheless, the ability to cope with change, transition, stress and anxiety at a community level is an aspect of spiritual well-being that was highlighted as significant. This may need to be born in mind even if the findings of this study did not highlight it as a major issue for residents. If peace is an important dimension of the resident's spiritual well-being, then conflict, in whatever form, has the potential to disrupt this. A proactive approach to change and stress management might be a way of enabling the spiritual well-being of the residents in a social context that will inevitably change in the future, even if not via the threat of the bypass.

Spirituality and the supernatural: God, prayer and the afterlife

A third broad theme related to the supernatural, God and the afterlife. Again, this theme had a series of sub-themes which captured the essence of this experience. As we have mentioned, a good deal of the resident's spirituality and spiritual well-being is located in the mundane (i.e. not formally spiritual) aspects of everyday life. There were, however, dimensions of their spiritual

experiences which were clearly located in aspects of experience which were not tangible or accessible through the ordinary everydayness of human experience.

God, prayer and religion

For some of the participants God, was clearly important:

Interviewer*: So what about a relationship with a higher power, or with God, or a god or something like that? What does that concept mean to you?*

James*: I don't think, I'm not…*

Margaret*: John's the best one to talk about this one…(laughs)*

John*: Well, I'm 68, and ever since I was a little boy I've heard a voice speaking to me. So, um, yeah. Yeah, I hear a voice speaking to me. I've always, all my life heard this voice.*

Interviewer*: Any idea who this?*

John*: Well I assume that this voice, I'm assuming it's the voice of God. But I definitely have heard, always all my life I've heard a voice speaking to me.*

Interviewer*: So, by and large, this is kind of like prayer and meditation, what, if I say Does God exist, or does a higher power exist, or (**John**: Yes) is a higher power important…?*

Jane*: you can speak to him but you can't see him. Or you can read it in the Bible.*

John*: Well I believe in God.*

Some residents had been involved with particular religious communities over many years:

David*: I mean, I've been going to church for a long time because, uh, yeah, like Christmas play, we do Christmas plays. It's all kind of spiritual.*

But a lot of people in the world don't believe in it. I mean, they're so busy in Aberdeen that they don't think about it. That's what I'm concerned…
Jane*: They're very removed from it, because they're very materialist nowadays, you know, it's very hard for people to believe in this day and age…*
Helen*: to believe in…*
David*: spir…*
Jane*: spiritual…*
David*: yes.*
Jane*: spiritual things?*

For David spirituality as experienced within a formal religious tradition and within a specific religious community was important. It provided him with a perspective wherein he could understand himself positively, but it also provided him with a critical perspective on the things that society has come to value and prioritise. His religion had become a long-standing conduit for his spirituality and one that brought him a good deal of peace and well-being. There was a general agreement, even amongst those who did not express an interest in religion, that issues of faith, belief and the possibility of something beyond what we can experience and explain with our senses was important, even if the way that such things manifested themselves in people's lives varied greatly.

In line with our previous observations about the tension between spirituality and spiritual well-being, participants gave us little indication as to what the content of the word 'God' meant to them. Rather than trying to define God, God seemed to be discovered or encountered in the practices of attending religious communities, meeting people and praying:

In terms of going to church services, some said they attend the chapel at Newton Dee, but seemed to do so out of a sense of routine rather than a sense of trying to meet a specific spiritual need:

Interviewer: *So is a belief in God or in a higher power something that is important to a person's life, or do they not necessarily need it?*
David: *It's important to my life.*
Christine: *I always went to Sunday School as a child.*
Interviewer: *Sunday school.*
David*: And church. But nowadays I just don't go.*
Laura*: I go occasionally if I need to, like Christmas or Christmas Eve.*

Others attended a church outside of the community. The participant who was most familiar with church practice had been involved every Sunday for 30 years. Within that framework prayer appeared to be significant, although it was unclear as to precisely whom prayer was offered to:

Jack*: Anyway, yes. It's good that some people have it, inside us, and then some people don't, well, they believe in it, God, and then we need that, we have God also in um, what's the word, um, to grow up around us, you know. (whispering) And, it's nice to, people go inside us, like when we go to church and pray, pray for others and they're not around us.*
Interviewer*: Is prayer important?*
Group*: general yes's, nods.*
Mary*: Yes, very important, very holy.*
Interviewer*: Does anyone think that prayer is not important?*
John*: I never go to church anyway, I never go to church. I just go to St. Michael's chapel.*

<u>Praying for the dead</u>

Many of the participants spoke about the need to pray and the importance of this for their spiritual well-being. However, there was a real diversity of understandings about what prayer meant and to whom it was addressed and why. For some, prayer was clearly directed towards God and/or spiritual forces that lay beyond the tangible and immediately knowable. However, for

others their prayer life was focused on or around those whom they once knew, but who had now passed on:

Interviewer*: Do you ever pray during the day, just because you are sad, or because you want to talk to someone? Or…*
James*: Sometimes I do pray, sometimes in the evening, or maybe after lunch, or sometimes I pray sometimes. My mum and my dad, they're both up there. I pray for dad.*
Mary*: My grandmother's up there too. Both great-grandparents up there, and our prayers, they're very important, and it's holy.*
Interviewer*: When you say, up there, what do you mean by up there?*
Mary*: Heaven, there's heaven is spiritual. You can't see them.*
Brian: *We can't see them, they can see us because we can't actually see them. Because the world is up there and it's not, we can't actually see them from our eyes, in heaven, we, if we done something wrong, I don't know how they can do it, like God can knock someone on the wall. Like sky, like thunder (makes thunder sound), and you can't actually, we can't see them. We got, they can see us. Cause I remember the first day, we had a telephone call and we said, my mum said telephone for her, got can't believe I was upset about it and really in tears and really upset and really upset about it. And so we went to this funeral a long time ago, we went to see my mum's funeral and it was in a grave about this size, very big, and … ashes and we had to dig the hole. And in Michael's chapel it's like this, a tiny one and put tiny plants next to it. It's so nice. I go there sometimes, I go there to see my mum, … and looked like how she, we got a picture of her, she's had long, shorter gray hair and she really looks so, but now she's not there.*

This experience of communicating with dead relatives is a phenomenon that has been noted elsewhere as a dimension of the grieving process for people with special needs (Swinton & Powrie 2004). Rather than simply moving on and internalising the dead person as per standard models of 'healthy

grieving', it has been noted that some people with special needs, and indeed people in general, psychologically hold on to the people who have died and graft them in to their social networks in ways that can be constructive and healing. In the same way as religious people graft in religious figures such as Jesus, Mohamed and Buddha and turn to them in times of need or reflection 'as if' they are real, it has been noted that many people do precisely the same thing with bereaved relatives and loved ones (Polner 1989). Rather than being understood as nothing more than pathological denial, recent models of grieving have suggested that this process is common amongst many people and indeed may be health enhancing. The fact that there seems to be a thin line between life and death does not indicate pathology, nor is it necessarily the product of a lack of understanding about the finality of death. Rather it may be a healthy way of dealing with the loss of someone close to you. As we listened to the ways in which people spoke about people they had lost, it appeared that there may well be a similar process at work within the lives of some residents. Rather than writing off such dialogue as ill-informed or the product of a misunderstanding or denial of death, it might be useful to explore the ways in which interaction with the dead functions in the coping strategies people use for healthy living. It was not possible to explore this further within this study, but it is certainly something that is worthy of consideration for future study in relation to the spiritual well-being of Camphill residents.

<u>Uncertainty about the value of religion</u>

However, while God and formal religion were important for some, this did not seem to be the case for others:

Interviewer*: What about things like, maybe while you're having quiet time by yourself, do things like prayer or meditation ever…*
Group*: no, not…, no…*
Interviewer*: Do you think those are important at all?*
Group*: few nods, appear to be thinking, not too sure…*

June*: yes, they can be very important.*

David*: When I sit I think about?, which is my, uh, I wouldn't want to discuss it, what she did, cause I think, that can be also personal….*

Interviewer*:In general, your opinion of prayer and meditation would be positive or negative or how would you…?*

David*: I think it would be positive, I don't pray that often but I do occasionally.*

Interviewer*: Can they be helpful to a person?*

June*: Yes, they could be if needed*

When pressed further this group remarked that these things could be helpful '*if needed'*. Nevertheless, there appeared to be a good deal of ambiguity about God and formal religion. The reasons for this tension were not clear. As we will see, a few participants had seen visions and/or angels, and seemed to relate to the spiritual world but not to the organisation of that world by the church. Exploration of exactly what people mean by visions, angels, and 'things you cannot see' would be an interesting topic for further research.

The afterlife

All of this leads us to the final sub-theme that emerged from our discussions with the residents: *the practical significance of the afterlife.* Whilst people in general appeared to be disinterested in God and formal religion, a number of participants had interesting and strong views on the nature of the afterlife. We have already looked at one way - prayer for the dead - in which residents understood and dealt with the finality of death. Another important way has to do with people's vision of heaven. For many residents, heaven was perceived as a place of peace where one is reunited with one's loved ones. It was not necessarily associated with God, but it did often contain images of spiritual beings, some of which impinge on the present in mysterious ways:

I get sad, happy, um, quite a lot of emotions, and emotions can be big emotions. There's all different kinds of spirituals, like my favourite spiritual is [walking] *into heaven, and you can talk to that person, like a angel comes from heaven and it can glow to the window, and it can go right through. And I seen one, I seen one in real life, spiritual, I talked to that person.*

Heaven is where angels come from and is also the home of the human spirit; the place where we go to when this life is completed:

Mary*: We go up to heaven.*[after you die] *Your spirit goes up to heaven.*
James*: You have this vision, and you go through a dark tunnel, and come out the other side and see these bright lights. That's what a lot of people have had, these visions, and they sometimes see a television, black and white, going backwards to their early childhood.*
David*: The other thing is, the soul never dies, we're just a material, the heart is just a pump, you know, that's another thing that carries on, you know, like why you have the solar system. Well, my mother would say they should leave the heavens alone, you know, these rockets and see there's life on other planets, like Mars, Jupiter or whatever. My mother was old-fashioned (laughs), she'd leave the heavens alone. No, that's true, there's so much going around the earth, satellites and stuff, well that's not a good spirit. Where do you go, I mean, that's the thing? Yeah, somehow, we have to enjoy life while we're here, you know?*

For some the vision of heaven was an important source of hope and well-being in relation to themselves and those whom they had lost.

<u>Reincarnation</u>
For others it was not heaven that was important but the idea that we would return to this earth in a different form: *reincarnation.* For some it was the

idea of reincarnation that helped them make sense of death and what follows death:

> **David**: *Well, what's reincarnation, and then you're not afraid of death, because sometimes it can be true, we can come back. I mean, I used to remember when I was born, I vaguely remember, a sunrise and I remember (laughing) I was lying on my back in a cot, this baby…and then sometimes it can, then you're not afraid, because we'll all go to heaven and then come back. It's a possibility you might come back as a woman, you know….(group laughs, murmurs)*
> **Interviewer**: *So there is something after death?*
> **David**: *nobody knows, nobody knows.*

As we move on in this report, the idea of reincarnation will be explicated much more clearly by participants from the other research sites. Here, the significant thing is that the way the residents perceived life after death deeply impacted upon the way that they understood and interpreted particular aspects of their lives and the experiences that they encountered within them. What happens after death was of significance to residents, but once again, not simply as a conceptual wondering, but rather as something that impinged on their day-to-day lives in important and tangible ways.

Conclusion

In concluding this section of the report, it seems that spirituality and the search for spiritual well-being is an important aspect of the lives of the Camphill residents, although the means through which this is achieved are varied and at times contradictory. The 'first tier' of spiritual well-being for the residents related to that which was very concrete and present in daily life. This included the people with whom they interact on a regular basis, routine and rhythm, working in and being part of a community but also the opportunity to be alone and have quiet time by themselves. In general, the

spirituality of the residents as a group is found, or at least manifested, in concrete, daily activities. A deeper reflection reveals these practices, assumptions, understandings and experiences to be deeply meaningful. However, for the residents it is not the hidden meaning that is important but the concrete reality of striving for spiritual well-being.

With regard to *spiritual well-being*, the residents we interviewed seemed to reflect the thoughts, experiences, struggles and appreciations of a group of people who are stable in their environment, happy to be where they are and fulfilled by the activities of their daily life. They seemed content to be at Camphill, specifically Newton Dee, because it provided them with, work, routine, rhythm, activities, a sense of belonging within a community, friendships and relationships, support and care in difficult situations and/or with difficult tasks - all things they expressed as important to their spiritual well-being. One of the residents interviewed lived 'off site' in her own place, and seemed to enjoy that, but otherwise all lived at Newton Dee and seemed happy with that. No one expressed a desire to be away from Camphill or to be included within wider society in any other way than the way that they already are.

Part 3: Thematic Reflections on the Spirituality of Aberdeen Co-Workers

Introduction

We opened our discussions with the same set of questions we had used with the Camphill residents. This line of questioning was designed to initiate discussion on a broad level and to identify topics for further exploration which would let the shape of the community's beliefs unfold with minimal interference. The main themes that emerged were:

- Spirituality and religion
- Relationships
- Meaning, Connectedness and the Rhythms of life
- Holy Spaces

Overall, however, the answers given to the questions relating to what spirituality was differed significantly from the residents, the main difference being primarily one of perspective. As these are the people who work *with* and are *responsible for* people with special needs,[8] their emphasis seemed to be on the sense that they had a role in *creating* a spiritual environment within which residents could explore their spirituality. Their role was perceived as one of *facilitating* the spiritual well-being of the residents. This came across time and again, and seemed to correlate and complement the discussion we had had with the residents in various ways. This will be discussed in more detail later in this section of the report.

[8] The co-workers interviewed included those working and living with adults in Newton Dee and with the children who attend the Camphill Rudolf Steiner Schools (CRSS), most of whom are residential placements Co-workers from CRSS were included due to the initial focus of the study with regards the AWPR. For the sake of ease, the term 'residents' will be used in this section of the report to denote both adults and children with special needs.

Spirituality and religion

As one might expect, bearing in mind the previously mentioned spiritual diversity of European culture, there was a rich diversity of understanding surrounding precisely what spirituality was. However, despite notable differences, there was an overall consensus among the co-workers that spirituality did not necessarily relate to religion. This was expressed quite strongly by some:

> *Spirituality has nothing to do with religion, really. To me it* [religion] *doesn't make any sense, and I have no kind of interest in religion, because for me it's not… my experience of it is that it takes away the possibility to experience spirituality as something in our daily life.*

Some co-workers had had negative experiences of religion which clearly remained with them and challenged them as to the appropriateness of religion as a vehicle for their spirituality:

> *I did go* [to church] *when I was a child but then I got confirmed and the priest almost didn't want to confirm me because I was such a doubter in the church, but I did believe in nature and the good in seeing things through, and that's how I got into farming and biodynamic farming. I believed healing was in nature and I couldn't find a church that was just the right thing for me. Although I believed in Christ, and His being on earth somewhere, and accompanying me, but not always in the church because I felt the church was too materialistic. But I don't know if I feel that now, I mean I go to a cathedral for a service and I remember on New Year at the millennium we went to thing in Salzburg Cathedral, and it was a very strong spiritual experience, and of course reading from the T.S. Elliot…*

A number of co-workers seemed to think that, at least in their experience, religion was very much located in the materialism of contemporary culture and although it may serve a spiritual purpose for some, their spirituality and

spiritual experience emerged from different roots and had a quite different focus. Something of the communal focus of people's spirituality emerged in their reflections on the significance of the various festivals that Camphill engaged in.

The significance of festivals

Within the community, the various festivals that were regularly celebrated played an important role in people's perception of their spiritual development and expression. People felt that the spirituality of the community drew strength from the celebration of the festivals and observation of Christian holidays. These festivals were perceived as an expression of the cycles and rhythms of the earth and nature, as noted previously in our discussions with the residents. The festivals were highlighted as significant in all of the co-worker focus groups. While the festivals were inherently Christian in ethos and origin - one participant mentioned that they connect to the life of Christ, another to the '*Christ impulse*' - other participants felt that the narrow focus on the term 'Christian' to refer to these celebrations was limiting and exclusivist. More often than not, the festivals are seen as significant events, retaining their religious connotations for some, which draw the whole community together and connect them to the 'deeper meaning' of life. They thus form an important dimension of the meta-rhythm of the communities which was earlier highlighted as spiritually important.

Spirituality as beyond that which is tangible

In contrast to the concreteness of the residents perceptions of spirituality, the overall emphasis of the co-workers tended to be on an understanding of spirituality as something which was *intangible*, an *awareness* that what we see is not all there is; that there is a hidden *essence* to each person that gives them worth and wholeness, that it *transcends* time, that it is something that moves *between people*, and that it gives *meaning and purpose* to ordinary events and interactions. Whilst there was a clear interest in spiritual well-being and how best that could be developed, the more conceptual issues

surrounding the essence of spirituality were much more to the fore in our discussions with the co-workers:

Yes, I think it's really about all the things that you can't see that still are there. Like, I must say I really firmly believe in, like when I work with the children it's maybe more obvious, you know, you have a very handicapped child but there is still a healthy spirit there, and that you actually can somehow address it, healthy, healthy…who are you in a person, even someone who cannot speak, cannot move?

The supernatural

Within this conception of spirituality as relating to that which is beyond the tangible, some participants had an acute sense of the supernatural and the significance of spiritual experiences which provided glimpses of another realm of experience:

Deborah: *I think it means to have an awareness of the existence of the spiritual world, and to live with that awareness.*

Margaret*: Well, one of the things it means for me is to be aware that physically what we can see and hold and touch and so on, which is open to our normal senses, is only half of the whole reality. That, around that, in that, behind that is something that's not very visible easily…but is just as real as the physical world. And, that means, well, that influences my attitudes and my behaviours and my, the way I live.*

Jane*: For me it means a belief in but also an experience of something untouchable, invisible, and that can be, I think it's (as?) defined for me as spiritual beings, but they can be on any level from angels to the being of the tree or the soil.*

This sense of the 'otherness' of spirituality came across clearly in some of the narratives of spiritual experiences that people related to us. Two examples will help to make the point:

I had two friends who drowned in the same year and I was sick. And I was ill when one of them drowned, and my mother came and said she had just walked into the sea. She was told off, she wasn't allowed to be there on the jetty and she just walked off the jetty and nobody saw she walked off and they just found her lying at the bottom of the sea and she was only five. And then it was like the whole room lit up, and I was ill, I had a high temperature, and I could see this child outside the window in the clouds and I couldn't understand what was going on but I knew then that she was still my friend and I mustn't forget this person, and…so that was a spiritual experience.

I was playing in an orchestra in that school when he, my grandfather, died. And we knew he could die, and the lights just flickered, and I knew that meant that my grandfather just died in that moment. And when I came back from the practice, my cousin came back and said you shouldn't go in because your grandfather just died'. I said 'I know.' It wasn't a surprise at all, I just knew that he had died. And so I just, believed in the afterlife.

Here spirituality is clearly associated with experiences and events which occur in this world, but which relate to that which lies behind or beyond normal experience. The precise source of this spiritual experience was not made clear. There was no indication that its interpretation should be in any sense religious, but as to the details of what forces were conceived of as being at work within such experiences, people were either unsure or simply did not feel the need to articulate this within the focus group situation.

The spiritual basis of caring

For some co-workers the supernatural dimension of spirituality and these types of narratives of the extraordinary was important both in terms of the ways in which they understood the idea of spirituality, and also, interestingly,

for some, it also formed an important part of the motivation behind their various caring activities:

Mary: *I can say for myself, my main driving force in my work with the children is that really, actually* [the results] *of my work will probably only show up in the next life.*
Ina*: So there is the primary motivation that…*
Mary*: For me, I would like to underline personally…I would actually not like to generalise this to Camphill…*
Jane*: It's inherent in Steiner's concepts, but if you go round and speak to everybody, I think it would be individual.*
Ina*: I find, on a practical level that if you act as if something does matter, is important, you'll find that it makes a difference to the child. That's my personal observation, that if you are convinced that it's right to do it, that you should do it, it will bring about a change in the child, positive change. So it's a bit of both really…*
Mary*: Of course, we're looking for effects now.*

This perspective relates to the idea of reincarnation which we have mentioned previously and will return to again below. We noticed in our reflections on the conversations with the residents, the ways in which perceptions of the future and of what happens after death impinge in significant ways on how people act in the present. A similar dynamic seemed to be at work with some of the co-workers. The ways in which they perceived the realm of the spiritual and what occurs after death was profoundly important for the motivation for their work in the present.

Spiritual persons

There was a general assumption that all people are inherently spiritual. That is, that all people have a spiritual nature which transcends any disability, and that the task of co-workers is to help to find, nourish and support that side of a person and allow it to come to the fore. In doing this the full potential of

the person who is being offered support can be enabled to emerge and develop. When this happens the movement towards discovering a person's 'true spiritual self' is initiated and sustained:

… I think, being aware of the spiritual dimension helps us not to categorise people too narrowly, to be aware, as we said, of the ability of people to grow and develop and change. Because actually we want to help our children to be who they really are, and to learn to live with themselves.

There was a good deal of emphasis on finding and knowing the 'healthy spirit' inside a person with disabilities, the wholeness of someone who is not whole outwardly in body. Indeed, some of what was meant by such expressions as 'being who they are' and 'learning to live with themselves' related to discovering the spiritual person who was not affected by the limitations of disability. Importantly, within this approach to a spiritually inspired mode of support and caring, it was the *person* rather than the disability that always took priority both in language and in people's practices:

…but also language itself is our understanding, the children feel they are addressed and allowed to be, never mind their disability or failings or whatever, but it's not addressed in these moments, but who they actually are. That is…very important. And it sounds as if these are the only moments…I think I can find many moments where that is addressed…who they actually are.

There was a strong sense that a critical part of the work of the co-workers at Camphill is to strengthen the residents - in addition to each other and the community as a whole - as part of 'building something for the future'. Part of this future included discovering the spiritual person who is not bound or limited by any form of disability. This was highlighted by participants as a primary difference between Camphill and the 'outside world'; an awareness of 'something else' relating to people and things that permeates the ethos of

Camphill. This way of thinking and focusing on the spirit of the person led to a particular *way of meeting* with people who have disabilities; that allowed co-workers to 'meet people' in ways which contained a quality which was quite specific to the emerging spiritual framework.

Relationships: A way of meeting

Throughout all of our conversations with the co-workers, it was clear that relationships were important for people's understanding of spirituality. Indeed, in a real sense, it was relationships which formed the essential framework of all of the participant's understandings of what spirituality was and what it meant to have spiritual well-being. Likewise with the residents, relationships were core:

Relationships and friendships are very important. Sometimes it's nice to be close to someone, it's so special. Like, for instance, householders, or if you're going to church and if you see someone sad or, emotions, and you know they have a guardian angel, they can come and watch you and do things spiritual. Like first take your hand, like a woman, a guardian angel, you put your hand and they put their hand in front of you…

Relationship, connectedness and friendship form the essence of spiritual community living. However, co-workers were clear that the way in which they met with those people with disabilities to whom they sought to offer support and care had a particular quality which was deeply informed by spirituality:

David*: I think it's good that because you are confronted with other people, even if you don't feel as much sympathy for one person as for another person. Its quite a challenge to gather round a person like that and I think especially that makes you want to know also these persons, and maybe try to find the positive aspect and want to appreciate them and just find your*

way to live with them and the best way for you and for everyone…because you are surrounded, it would make it much harder for you, maybe for this person as well, and might also disturb the whole atmosphere in the house or for the children…

Jean*: I think for me, when I came, I had done a youth and community work training before I came to Camphill and when I came to Camphill I straightaway saw that there was a difference, a way of meeting, especially the children, the pupils here, because there was a…they always met with the understanding that there's a reason why the child, this child has this particular handicap or special needs, and there was never the feeling of feeling sorry for that child or sorry for the family, but much more well, there's a purpose, there's a purpose in this and there's a purpose in the fact that I've come to join that house community or there's a purpose in that I'm going to work with that particular child, in the same way as I think now, not any longer, there's a purpose that all of us have come to this place.*

We will return to the importance of finding meaning in day-to-day experiences below. Here the thing to bear in mind is that the spiritual orientation which explicitly and implicitly underpinned the caring practices of a number of the co-workers provided the context for a particular way of encountering people; a way which allowed them to meet at the level of *person-to-person* rather than rather than focusing on the negativities of disability. This acknowledgement in turn leads us on to another dimension of this way of meeting: the importance of *faithfulness.*

The principle of faithfulness

The meeting between co-workers and residents was not always an easy one. Some of the people that the co-workers supported and lived with could be difficult, disruptive and not particularly easy to love. In order to meet them in the way described above, it was necessary to develop perseverance and to

work according to what was described by one participant as '*the principle of faithfulness*':

> *The principle of faithfulness… you know, you meet the essence of the person and you have to hang on to that. And even though you may go through great things with the person, don't forget what the essence of that person is, even though you may really be struggling with the person, there's something there you've met before and, and that's part of the community building process. But as James* [another member of the focus group] *said about our residents, there's this ability to see beyond the person, and I think that's also, you know…we forget that's how our friends are, very intellectually impaired, and being impaired in their intellect, other faculties and…maybe come to the fore, and the ability to meet the real person. They have that, and that's much more than we have.*

The principle of faithfulness, which is very much informed by the types of spiritual assumptions that have been mentioned previously, allows the possibility of the co-workers developing ways of meeting people with special needs which are potentially re-personalising and profoundly humanising. This way of meeting leads to relational faithfulness and ultimately to forms of peace that transcend the individual and are reflected in the general atmosphere of the community:

> *I was just going to say that you know, this thing that people say sometimes, when they come to Newton Dee or to Camphill in general: 'It's a remarkable place, and something special lives here. I don't quite know what it is, but I feel it when I come here.' My feelings having pondered this is just that kind of thing, it's that there's faithfulness practiced, confidence builders, there's humility, there's dedication, all these things are being done by people all the time. And certain practices are just dedicated to being faithfully done, time after time after time, and that as you say has a result. And that becomes almost tangible, and that I think is what people*

experience when they come down to Newton Dee or go into a Camphill community… it's almost becoming tangible because it's done time after time after time, faithfully and without question and without expecting any result, like from

Perceived in this way, it is clear that spirituality implicitly and explicitly seems to form a significant dimension of the dynamic and practices within the Camphill communities.

Tradition and change

Much of what has been highlighted thus far finds at least an essential resonance with many of Steiner's and König's teachings (see for example König 1986; Jackson 2006). It would therefore appear that aspects of Camphill's traditional spiritual teaching still impact upon the ways in which care is formulated and practised today. However, in our discussions with the younger, Camphill co-workers who had been there for relatively short periods of time (i.e. 1 year or more), there was evidence that perhaps the traditional spiritual approaches do not hold as much weight as they do for the more mature Camphill co-workers. Consequently, there is a possibility that they may not carry on into the next generation.

There was a definite respect for the past and its traditions. However, there was also a sense that there was a need, and indeed a desire, to move on and respond to changing social and spiritual contexts:

We are the beneficiaries of the inner work, and the reverence, the inner work of the co-workers of the past and the reverence they have towards the building and the land and material things that creates the peace that people experience when they come to visit Camphill which we often don't experience ourselves. But when we spoke last week with, was it Professor Brown, this was one of the things that we've become quite aware of. And I think that's a challenge for us now, as current co-workers, to find ways

that we can maintain that and to make that real still as we live in this world which is so much faster and in a world which is more materialistic, and in a world where if something breaks you just throw it away and get a new one, and you buy your Ikea furniture which is the same as thousands and thousands of other pieces of Ikea furniture, rather than spending a bit more money and buying a piece of furniture which has got some aesthetic beauty to it, like we struggle to get this balance right.

The willingness to engage with materialism and to recognise the spiritual significance of our changing culture for the Camphill communities, offers both a threat and a promise. The threat is that the practices which enable vital ways of meeting people with disabilities are replaced by more managerial, bureaucratic and 'politically correct' approaches to care and support which, whilst efficient, could easily lose the unique spiritual dimension that was highlighted as significant by a number of co-workers. The potential promise is that the movement away from some of the older traditions brings with it a fresh vitality and new approaches which retain the significance of the spiritual, but create new modes which can cope with the rapidly changing social and political context within which Camphill seeks to offer care and community:

I think…that the old ways which were carried by the founders and people who followed behind them have died out. And we're struggling to find new forms and new ways to connect us as a community. I think more co-workers now find their own way to connect to their particular spiritual path, it's not given that it has to be this particular way or that particular way. Like this evening now that we're having, which used to be very formal in the Bible evenings, was a very clear preparation for the service that took place on a Sunday. As you see that's completely changed—we used to also wear our Sunday best and it was a very, very formal event that now, the service is actually also on Fridays rather than just on Sundays because the children go home, and then we transform that into community evenings.

So we've tried to find out what was the essence of that tradition and how can we translate that into a modern context, and we realise that perhaps the most important part is that we have an opportunity to meet together as a group of co-workers, part of our task where we can turn to a conversation which is perhaps more uplifting, and, than the more mundane conversation than we might have in a house evening, looking at practicalities

It is not possible to speculate about the future and how such changes in perception and priorities will impact upon the motivation and caring practices of Camphill. However, we got the impression that there may be the beginnings of a shift in understandings and assumptions, the consequences of which it is too early to anticipate.

Meaning, connectedness and the rhythm of life

Deeply connected with the themes that have been discussed thus far was the idea that all human action has meaning beyond the immediacy of the particular situation within which it is carried out; that there was a rhythm and a sense of connectedness between everyday actions and their implications for the wider cosmos. The spiritual rhythm of the community was discussed both in micro and macro terms. The micro-rhythm of the day at Camphill included the verses (from Steiner) said in the morning, the mealtimes with their blessings and community-gathering emphasis, plus the routines of each house within each community. The macro-rhythm related to the day, the month, the year, the seasons, and ultimately the whole earth. These larger rhythms are reflected, as mentioned previously, in the community's celebration of the festivals - dimensions of community life and spirituality that were seen as central to the spiritual life of Camphill. These festivals not only mark the community's place within the cycle of nature, they also give the residents a concrete sense of where they are in time and of what to look forward to and how to look forward to it.

The idea of tuning into the rhythm at both the micro and macro levels provided people with a sense of connectedness to these rhythms and a consequent sense of the connectedness and meaningfulness of their actions:

…anything you do, is given meaning, and you don't only do it because it's necessary or practical or somebody's setting you to do it, but you can see meaning in all activities and that for example washing up isn't just a boring thing because it has to be done but it's a meaningful activity because it complements to the being of the whole house community, for example, and it's a contribution, a meaningful contribution, or, like we said the gardening or caring for the environment, or, and the curriculum, and that all has to do with this conviction that each person is a potentially undamaged spiritual being that needs to be respected and dignified, and just because somebody can't read and write, for example, doesn't mean they shouldn't have lessons in history and history of art, and, and so on, because it's a human right, in a way, to know about these things as well.

The timelessness of spirituality

This observation ties in with a key issue that came up repeatedly and seemed to be central to the spiritual structure of Camphill: the idea *of the transcendence of spirituality in time.* One participant referred to this idea as '*our moral responsibility*', to be aware that what we have done in the past affects today, and what we do today affects the future. Actions have consequences which resonate not only in the present but also throughout creation, now and into the afterlife:

I think it has for me the most consequences for daily life because everything that I do, everything that I do it has a meaning, it has a consequence, somewhere, and how I do something, whether I do it without thinking about it, without attention, whether I do it with you know, thinking 'oh, I hate doing this', or whether I try to do it with love, with attention,

makes a huge difference. Maybe you won't see it right now, but the difference it does make to me. You know, I think you can sense it.

This in turn led, for some, to the recognition of the importance of staying-in-the-present. That is, recognising the significance of the present and not allowing the tracks and complexities of the future to dominate and shape people's experiences:

I find very much also a feel, a kind of spiritual …, connectedness to daily life in being in the moment. And I find that the people I live with have, have it maybe easier? I don't know, but there is something where I see for them more being in the moment than me, because I think 'what am I doing tomorrow? And what have I not done there?' And I'm to rush there and here and back and…and that is a wonderful experience, in daily life, to be in that moment. And then when you start chopping the vegetables you're more mindful of what you do, yeah…it's aware of the essence, of being in the moment, of connectedness…

In the discussion, this sense of connectedness, timelessness and the recognition of the significance of the meaning of actions, seemed to provide a firm grounding not only for the value of people's work (as it transcends time) but also a motivation to continue working with and for the residents. Thus, the houses where they live, the residents with whom they work, the jobs they do, all these things have a purpose to them and therefore make them more meaningful and, in times of stress and strife, bearable. This in turn serves an important function in helping to keep the community together. As one participant put it, *'if it weren't for an awareness of this deeper meaning* [she would] *run away many times from many situations, from children or from co-workers or from colleagues.'*

Reincarnation

This discussion of meaning leads us back to the idea of reincarnation, an idea which was highlighted by the residents and one which was brought to the original Camphill by the community's founders. Reincarnation is a belief which forms a central core of Camphill's spirituality. The understanding of reincarnation expressed by the co-workers and reflected in the history of Camphill is more than just 'we will live again'. It is also, as has been suggested above, one of the reasons *why* co-workers must do what they do now in the way that they do it. What is done in the present will have an effect, '*hopefully for the good*', on both the co-workers' and the residents' next life. One participant said that her '*primary motivation*' in doing therapy with the children is that it will have an effect on them in their next life. All of the co-workers stressed, however, that they look for effects in the present as well, and try to carry on not knowing what lies ahead.

While the participants all seemed to share an awareness of the importance of a belief in the afterlife, whether it be reincarnation or interpreted otherwise, they stressed that such beliefs were an individual thing and not something that could be generalised to the whole of the Camphill community. This struck us as rather odd, bearing in mind that it is recognised as an important dimension of Camphill's history and tradition. Such ways of thinking about the individuality of spiritual beliefs may be indicative of an implicit movement from communal to individual spirituality and spiritual beliefs, which echoes a similar movement from the communal to the individual within contemporary Western culture. Again, this might indicate a shift in or away from tradition within the communities, at least in relation to spirituality and spiritual beliefs.

Holy Spaces

In general then, the spirituality of the co-workers connects strongly to meeting the inner being or 'essence' of each person, but specifically, as discussed in the groups, in connection to those with whom the co-workers

work. This connected to the 'inner work' done by people at Camphill - the work of meditation, taking time to be quiet and reflect, and in general creating spaces for interactions of a spiritual nature and import to take place. This need and search for peace was articulated to us in various ways:

I think for me it means to have a rhythm of day which gives me space to find some peace, so I can connect through other parts of my being which in normal life kind of take second place to just rushing around to the next, from one place to the next.

One participant called the creation of such spiritual spaces an area '*absolutely essential to our work*', and said that this kind of activity '*creates a spiritual atmosphere for things*'. Discussion on this topic revealed that while this idea of reflective practice is both encouraged and practised at Camphill, it is also one that often needs more focus and more time given to it, especially as it contributes to the health of the community overall. Again, it was articulated as a practice that was understood as being up to each individual, rather than a duty or function of the community. Co-workers said that they try to encourage each other to this end. This topic is interesting when compared with the residents' need for quiet time and having time to be by themselves to unwind and relax. As one of the co-workers put it, this time is '*a space where nothing is demanded, and you are allowed to sit back and receive'.* This 'holy space' can be discovered in prayer, meditation, silence or/and formal religious practices. The key thing to bear in mind is that it is not a 'natural space'. It has to be created, facilitated and protected.

Jennifer*: I think especially*[religious] *services are the spaces where their, which are created for the child to be. And the, my idea is still that if children don't want to go to the service, the question is then what does one have to create for them to have that experience, that there is a space for them, where you can come to peace, in whatever way. And I think that*

that's the holy space that, which everybody somewhere has, or a majority of people have access to because they can choose, but many haven't.
Interviewer*: That is actually something that has come out quite a bit, in my talking to people, is this idea of quiet time or quiet space, or, and kind of a striving for peace. So is that what, that sounds like what you are talking about?*
Jennifer*: To some extent, and I think peace one can say, shut oneself up in the room, but peace can also be through a colour experience, through a visual experience, by looking at a picture or to, listening to music and can, it's just the space where nothing is demanded, and you are allowed to sit back and receive, to feel, and then that, what one feels might…*

This idea of searching for space and finding holy spaces, either physical or psychological spaces, was a very strong aspect of community for a number of participants. Quiet time and time for reflective practice in turn provides a source of strength for being confronted and surrounded by so many other people, which many cited as a difficulty of living in community. As one person put it: *'You can't assume because we're 150 adults, we're 150 friends!'* Living in community can be hard and stressful work. Finding space to discover oneself and to escape from the pressures of living and working together is an important dimension of people's search for spiritual well-being.

The groups were clear and honest in their assertions that it isn't easy to build up and live in a community such as Camphill and that they often 'struggle together'. However, people continued to strive for depth and genuineness in their interactions with each other. People felt that living in a community like Camphill meant that you can't hide parts of yourself that you would otherwise keep private: *'Sharing your inner life with other people* [is] *part of the work'* of 'being there', and is integral to what makes life meaningful. Again, this is where seeing meaning in human encounter mediates the difficulties of living together and helps co-workers deal with those difficulties.

As one participant put it, working to live together means *'having space made in other peoples' life for you and making space in your life for someone else'.* This in turn '*allows you to see what really matters*'. Thus despite the difficulties, it is a challenging process that participants seemed to value for the growth it also spurs.

The difficult nature of living in a community like this (a difficulty which found echoes in the residents reflections on community living), means that people depend on others to a certain extent to help support and uphold them. The positive and negative aspects of this were expressed by the groups, who said it is a process they see as important but also one that sometimes fails them. While the community tries to be there for each person, especially in times of crisis, sometimes people wait too long before they jump in, and/or don't notice someone having trouble until it's too late. One group identified that it is difficult to 'make' people take breaks, or practice self-reflection. They can only encourage those at Camphill to look after themselves and work on their relations with others, but they can't force the community to grow. As with other communities, each person is responsible for themselves to a certain degree. One participant did seek to verify her opinion with the rest of the group that in real times of crisis the community is '*pretty good*' at holding each other up. In addition, the group said that it is in these times of crisis '*where actually the learning comes about*' and where people struggling together begin to grow as a community.

The groups expressed many times over how much they are encouraged and challenged by the residents to this end. The tendency of the residents (as described by the co-workers) to be open, faithful, non-judgmental, welcoming to everyone, trusting, accepting and to love unconditionally in turn inspires the co-workers to be the same. This mutually edifying nature of the community becomes tangible in that, as one participant put it, the residents:

then value that you trust them, that you spend time with them, that you're interested in them, that you are willing to have your life changed by them, that you try to make a home with them…for me that is spirituality made real.

These interactions, coming from living together and learning to be a community together, mean that people at Camphill are changed, challenged to grow and to develop - a process for which they expressed gratefulness.

Conclusion

Over the last 65 years, the social climate surrounding Camphill Aberdeen has changed in many ways. Many expressed that there is a move to find what the essence of the early traditions were and how they can be translated '*into a more modern context*'. The key, as one participant saw it, is '*not to change the whole, but to make sure that these kind of rituals are meaningful for the people who are [*involved*]'*. Another put it that they are trying to '*find modern ways* [to do things at Camphill] *which are true to the people who are here now'*. Nevertheless, the perceived threat is that things will just '*fade away*', that they will open themselves to the wider society so much that they may lose their own identity. As it is, those who live and work at Camphill expressed that they value their interactions with the surrounding community, via the bakery, cafe, shop, etc., which are open to visitors and receive quite a solid trade. On one hand, these interactions reveal to the rest of society how different Camphill is, how friendly and peaceful a place - as people remark to those who live there. But on the other, they may also have their spiritual price, if the Camphill ways become endangered or skewed so that their difference is no longer recognised or valued, even by those who live and work there.

Section Four: Spirituality in the Botton Community

Part 1: About Botton

Botton Village, the largest of the Camphill Village Trust's centres, is a rural Camphill community located at the head of the scenic Danby Dale within the North Yorkshire Moors National Park. The first Camphill community for adults with special needs, it has grown considerably since its beginnings in 1955, and now covers some 650 acres, with its five farms and surrounding woodlands. Castleton and Danby villages are the nearest local communities, with larger urban settlements of Middlesbrough and Stockton-on-Tees to the west and Whitby and Scarborough on the coast to the east.

Botton offers a range of opportunities for home, work, education/training and social/cultural life within a community environment to around 280 people, including 130 adults with learning difficulties and other special needs. Those providing support are mainly long term co-workers, although Botton also has a number of guest volunteers who join the community for periods of 6 months to two years. There are also some 35 employees whose skills and expertise assist Botton's work. In terms of organisation and communal living Botton is a working village within which all are encouraged to use their abilities for the benefit of the community.

Home life

The village is organised into five neighbourhoods, with houses and workshops based round each of the farms. Residential arrangements consist, in the main, of supported living in around 30 extended family-type households of varying sizes. In these, home life is shared by those with special needs and those who support them and their families. There are also some semi-independent supported living apartments available. The type of

accommodation varies but is of a high standard, including farmhouses, purpose-built accommodation, modern barn conversions and homes designed taking into account the needs of the elderly. One house is dedicated for those with more significant additional needs, including nursing care, so that residents can stay in Botton, if they wish, should they become less able. There are 10 houses providing for only co-workers, some of whom are 'retired'

The village has a comprehensive range of amenities on site including:

- a health centre providing everyday care and therapies for all in the community
- a village store and coffee shop for use by visitors and the community
- a gift shop selling items from the craft workshops and other Camphill centres
- a bookshop.

Work and training opportunities

There is a wide range of work opportunities provided within the village, with appropriate on-the-job training.

Not surprisingly land based work is a significant feature of life at Botton. The farms and gardens use organic/biodynamic methods to produce food for the village, with surplus being sold to the locality. A seed enterprise grows and processes organic seed for use within Botton and for sale to others growers. Through forestry work the woodlands are managed and timber cut for processing in the Botton sawmill. Maintenance of village's amenity grounds provides a further source of outdoor work.

The food-processing centre on site makes organic jams and juices, which are outlet in the store and beyond. The creamery produces cheese, butter and yoghurt and the bakery bakes organic bread and biscuits, both for the village and the general public.

There is also a variety of craft orientated workshops. A wood workshop, glass workshop, candle workshop, dolls workshop and weavery all produce a variety of high quality goods. Botton Central Sales markets and distributes these products, along with items from other Camphill centres, worldwide.

In addition, Botton has its own printers and paper workshop. There is a maintenance garage on site, run by local mechanics, which serves both Botton and the local community.

In all these enterprises adults with special needs work alongside those supporting and living with them for the benefit of the community.

Social and cultural life

Social, cultural and educational activities also take place within the village. Community spaces of varying dimensions, from the large village hall to small atmospheric rooms, provide a variety of venues for these events throughout the large village site. There is a Christian Community church in Botton, with the priest living on-site and the Botton village Waldorf School provides mainstream Steiner education for children from the community and the surrounding area. Botton also hosts the Camphill Eurythmy School, which trains students from all over the world.

During our time in Botton, we worked with 44 people with special needs within the context of 8 focus groups and one individual interview. Through a further 4 focus groups, 22 co-workers/employees also participated. In line with our method, we do not claim that those who participated represented the views of the other residents and co-workers/employees. Nonetheless, as will see, there was a good deal of resonance with the Aberdeen findings, which would lead us to assert that the core themes might have relevance beyond the boundaries of this particular community. In constructing the themes and ideas that are presented in the following section of the report, we have focused on developing ideas which are similar to those discovered in

Aberdeen and introducing new ideas and understandings which did not emerge in the first part of the research. As well as avoiding unnecessary overlap and repetition, this allows us to develop an understanding of the Botton community which is accurate yet coherent with the initial part of the study.

This aspect of the research was carried out by Dr. Aileen Falconer and analysed along with Professor John Swinton.

Part 2: Thematic Reflections on the Spirituality of Botton Residents

What is Spirituality?

In our conversations with Botton residents we were struck by the fact that, as per the Aberdeen study, people seemed clearly to identify the importance of spirituality even if, at times, they did not articulate the concept of 'spirituality' particularly clearly. Issues of meaning, purpose, hope, connectedness and God emerged clearly as important aspects of people's lives, leaving us with the overall impression that people recognised the importance of the practice of spirituality for their individual and communal lives. It was clear that spirituality makes a difference. Precisely what that difference is and how it might work itself out within the community was complicated and challenging, but fascinating and important.

A difficult concept

The first thing to notice is that for many of those with whom we spent time, spirituality was a difficult concept to articulate and tie down in any kind of neat definitional form. As one participant, Lily, put it:

> *I don't know what that word means, spiritual…I don't understand it fully cause nobody's, nobody's explained it to me*

Lily seemed to have an implicit understanding of the word insofar as she recognised that it existed and required explication but did not have the language necessary to tie it down. Even those who had a more formal religious approach to spirituality recognised that it was to an extent a fluid and contextual concept. For example, when asked whether religion had any particular connection with spirituality, Liam noted that:

…the main point is it depends on how you've been brought up. Like I've been brought up between a Catholic and a Protestant, so I'm sort of in between. I still sort of feel I go to church but for other people it might be, it might be a totally different experience for anybody else to describe what spirituality is, the way that they are.

Others as such felt that they really had no idea of what the word meant:

Interviewer*: What comes into your mind when we say that word spirituality?*
Pauline*: Don't know*
Rory*: No, I've never heard that word*
Interviewer*: Yeah? Keiran is there anything come to mind for you when we say that word?*
Keiran*: No*

This was in line with our previous experience in Aberdeen so in itself it was no surprise. A lack of conceptual clarity is not a 'problem' that is unique to people with special needs. Recent research within healthcare has indicated that many people have difficulty articulating the meaning of the term 'spirituality' (McSherry 1998; McSherry & Ross 2002). Indeed, it has been suggested that the term in itself has become meaningless even though the issues it represents remain of importance (Pattison 2001; Markham 1998). The plethora of definitions available within the literature would indicate that despite our desire for a neat single definition, the term 'spirituality' is clearly multivocal. This being so, in this study, a lack of clarity surrounding the precise meaning of the term spirituality should not be taken as meaning that it was not important in people's lives, simply that, for the residents, it was not articulated in formal concepts. Rather it was implicitly defined within the actions and practices that they utilised to develop a sense of spiritual well-being. Put slightly differently, spiritually finds its definition experientially rather than intellectually. As per our previous exploration, it was as we

excavated the various relational and spiritual practices that people engaged in that the implicit meaning of spirituality became explicit. This is an important point to bear in mind as we reflect on the data presented in this section. As we began to move away from the search for a formal definition and focused on its embodiment in the lives of residents, it became clear that spirituality, (which as we have seen from the Aberdeen study comprises such things as the search for relatedness, meaning, hope, connection, value, worth and God), was in fact central to many people's lives.

A good example of what we mean here is Rob's response to the question of what he thought spirituality meant. Rob responded: *'Well, not forthcoming…. Cause I also clean in the church as well'.* At first glance this appears a rather strange response. However a deeper reflection might indicate that, for Rob, the meaning of the term spirituality was embodied in his regular practice of church cleaning, a task which clearly gave him a sense of value and a connectedness with his religion. Rob's response to a conceptual question was to root it in a practical task. This of course was very similar to what we had found in Aberdeen. Interestingly, it is reminiscent of the way that spirituality is understood within the Jewish and Christian traditions wherein spirituality is not perceived as an ethereal, otherworldly thing, but something that is wrapped up in and fully engaged with the individual and the community's day-to-day practices.

For others operating outside of a traditional religious context, the meaning of spirituality was expressed in the concrete form, such as relationships:

Interviewer: W*hat gives your life meaning and purpose?*
Colm*: Going to meet different friends*
Interviewer*: So are friends part of spirituality for you? … Meeting friends? [Nods from Colm]*

We will return to the theme of relationships below. Suffice here to note that the primary thing that gives most people's lives a sense of meaning, purpose, value and connectedness is their relationships and in particular the relationship of friendship (Swinton & Powrie 2004; Swinton 2002). The question as to whether or not relationships are a social rather than a spiritual need is an interesting one that we will discuss in more detail as we move on. We would argue that they are in fact both. A person's spirituality is always embodied within some form of relationship; to separate the two is a wholly false dichotomy. However, the point here is that within this study, the people we worked alongside clearly identified relationships as an important aspect of their spirituality. So, in line with our commitment to participatory research, we need to take this assertion seriously.

With these provisional thoughts in mind, we can now begin to explore some of the key themes and perspectives that emerged from the data. We begin by looking at two aspects of spirituality that, in line with what we have just suggested, seemed to find their meaning in embodiment and practice rather than in conceptualisation: relationships and work. We will then examine those aspects of spirituality which, in a sense, are closer to the types of images, themes and experiences that are traditionally associated with spirituality. Taken together the issues highlighted provide us with a rich and diverse perspective on spirituality in its religious and its non-religious forms.

Relationships

Whilst there may have been a general lack of clarity surrounding the meaning of the term spirituality, it was striking that almost to a person our participants seemed to relate spirituality to some kind of relationship and connection with others. For some that connection was with God or a divine being, but for others the word 'spirituality' was clearly and deeply associated with relationships with other human beings at a temporal level. We will explore relationships with the divine later. In this section, we will spend some

time examining the role of temporal relationships in people's intuitive conceptualisations of what spirituality is and what it means for their lives:

Interviewer*: Is there anything else that you associate with this word spirituality?*
Colm*: eh [4 sec silence] Going to the coffee bar*
Interviewer*: Going to the coffee bar, is something. Is that something that you particularly like doing, Colm?*
Colm*: Yeah*
Interviewer*: What do you like about going to the coffee bar? Why do you like that?*
Colm*: Going to meet different friends*
Interviewer*: So is friends part of spirituality for you then? Meeting friends? [Nods from Colm]*

Time and again people associated meaningful personal relationships with what they understood spirituality to be:

Interviewer*: So friendships are for you important Brett are they?*
Brett*: Ah yes. If you don't get on with people you might as well forget it.*
Interviewer*: and tell us one thing that's good about your life, Robin?*
Robin: *About my life - my home, my friends and my work.*

Meaningful personal relationships formed the central core and the primary goal of all of our participants' lives and this clearly has spiritual significance.

There is, however, a danger that such understandings are dismissed as not belonging to the realm of the 'spiritual', despite the fact that people often took time, care and put a good deal of thought into their responses. It is therefore necessary to ask the questions: 'Is this really spirituality?', 'Is it not simply social behaviour?' It is certainly true that, depending on one's theoretical perspective, relationships could sit within emotional, social or

psychological needs rather than spiritual. However, we would respond to such an observation with two thoughts. Firstly, as we will see later in this report, the boundaries between the physical, psychological, emotional, social and spiritual aspects of human beings was considered to be quite blurred by our participants. It was clear that people felt that human beings were not compartmentalised and that each dimension of the person seamlessly fed and was dependant on the other. This, once again, is fully in line with the holistic thinking about the nature of the human person within Jewish and Christian anthropology, wherein human beings are perceived as being whole persons with body, mind and spirit inextricably interlinked. It also reflects recent development in science and psychology which indicate a similar interconnectedness within the human person[9]. It is true that post Cartesian culture has persuaded us to separate mind from body and to prioritise one over the other, but the evidence seems to suggest that spirituality is located in the whole person rather than simply within a discrete dimension. This being so, spirituality will inevitably be manifested in relationships as it is in all things.

Secondly, in line with our methodology of participative research, people themselves identified relationships as an important aspect of their spirituality. It was clear that those with whom we spent time viewed relationships as much more than simply a social encounter. There was something much deeper:

> *So I mean it is not only in church and things like that*[that we encounter spirituality] *but when you meet another human being…when you meet another person you're not just meeting a whole load of skin and bones and flesh and blood but you meet something and that must be something spiritual.*

[9] Goodkin, K. and Visser, A.P. (eds). (2000) *Psychoneuroimmunology: Stress, Mental Disorders and Health.* American Psychiatric Press

Statements such as this led us to recognise that we should accept relationships as something more than simply social experiences. The experience of our participants was that relationships contained something of the spiritual. We thus felt it appropriate to value, respect and accept what was given to us by our participants. Allowing spirituality to be defined by 'non-experts' is of course fully in line with the changing construction of spirituality that we mentioned in the introductory sections of this report.

Spirituality and relationships

Spirituality in all of its diverse forms tries to provide answers for the following questions: *Who am I? Where do I come from? Where am I going to? Why?* These are the major questions that, in various different ways, all of the world's religions seek to answer. They are also the types of questions that those with more diverse spiritualities that do not focus on religion try to work out. If we use these four questions as a rough framework to explore the spiritual importance of relationships then the connection between relationships and spirituality should become clear.

<u>Who am I?</u>

Relationships are foundational to how we understand ourselves. It is as we engage in relationships that we discover who we are. Identity comes from encounter rather than through self-reflection. As we encounter one another so also we bestow identity and value, or otherwise, on one another. This seemed to be the experience of our participants. The relationship of friendship in particular was a powerful mode of identity formation within which people began to learn who they were in their encounters with their friends. Put simply, friends make you happy:

Kevin*: I feel a lot happier if I've got other people in my life*
Interviewer*: What do you like about having friends?*
Pauline*: Happy!*
Interviewer*: Makes you happy to have friends*

Pauline*: Yes*

Happiness is of course an important part of 'the good life', but friendship offers more than happiness:

em I'd say I have a lot of friends here in Botton as well. Also a lot of friends that you can really turn to in a time of need and em it's just also to socialise and also all the other times I go to the coffee bar with Keiran on a Saturday or Sunday…and if he doesn't go then I have also other people I can go and be with. …So it's really good that we all have our friends here in Botton

In Connor's life friends offer support, validation and a space within which a person can be held in times of crisis. In a real sense he discovers who he is through his relational encounters. To the question 'Who am I?', his friends respond: 'Someone worthy of friendship!' Botton offers him a rich context for relational development which, in turn, enables him to establish a positive sense of self-worth and a firm place within the community.

<u>Where do I come from?</u>

Friendships and personal relationships thus give people a sense of self-in-community. However as well as locating a person securely in the present, such relationships also connect people with their past and what has come before them. Friends remind us of where we have been and how we have come to be the types of people we are now:

*I think Botton is a good place because you get lots of friends here that you wouldn't have (***Morag***:yes) if you didn't come here and it's interesting to see how many people you actually know from… from earlier in your days.*

The importance of this relational connection with the past will become clearer below when we begin to explore issues of death and the afterlife. But Derek's experience will help us at this point:

Interviewer*:Derek what about friends for you. Are they important?*
Derek*: Yes they are, yes, yes. I've lost my parents. My father and mother are dead, I lost my godparents. My father said to me 'This is your home here in Botton'*

For Derek his friendships in Botton and his father's 'instruction' that Botton should be his new home, enables him to move on from that which once gave him security, identity and a sense of homefullness – his parents – to his new home with his new family in Botton. Relationships remind us of the past, help us to understand the present and increase our sense of homefullness. By 'homefullness', we mean a sense that a person has roots that stretch beyond the present and which locate her in a place which she now considers to be home. Friendships over time give us a deep sense of homefullness. In order to discover ourselves fully in the present and to be able to move into and develop a future we need a secure grounding in the past - a sense of continuity, a sense that we have come *from* somewhere - to be able to develop a going *to* somewhere.

For some of the participants their 'natural families' were an important source of connection to their past and maintaining connection to their natural families was important in sustaining continuity between past and present:

Interviewer*: What's important in your life?*
Lauren*: My family*
Rob*: My mother's in a nursing home but that doesn't make any difference. I still, mind you I still send her, I still send her a letter, as I have done for the last 20 years, I do that every week without fail.*

Interviewer*: So family's still important to you (***Rob***: Oh yeah) even although you're not living with your mother (***Rob***: No, no, no, no* [i.e. in relation to not living with Mother*]) it's still important?*

For others, especially those with no close family alive and who had a long connection with Botton/Camphill, the community appears to function as a substitute family. For those who have lost parents, friendships can be like family, an important 'anchoring' resource, giving a sense of 'place' in the world

Where am I going to?

Participants gave us the strong sense that they were embedded in a complex mesh of interconnected relationships, within and beyond the community, as they went about the various tasks of living with each other, sharing similar events and experiences. This gave us an impression that people experienced a sense of being 'known by all' and also of 'knowing all'. This in turn contributed to a sense of security and safety, and, to a degree, a sense of shared direction and telos. This complex matrix of relationships, both within and beyond the community, provided the motivation for moving forward with life and offered the necessary support to do that.

Why?

Finally, our relationships provide us with a context in which we can understand why we are here. Our participants gave a number of responses to the 'why?' of relationships. People expressed the belief that we are in a real sense made for relationships and that that was really why we were here. For some it had to do with being of service to others: '*Yes I think in a way he feels he needs to help me and I need to help him'.* For others friendship was a solution to loneliness and other sources of disconnection:

Interviewer:*In what ways are friendships important to you do you think?*

Euan: *It saves you from, I think it saves people from, helps people to not be lonely and to avoid, you know, getting into trouble and things like that*

Work

All of the people with whom we spoke highlighted work as an important aspect of spirituality. Even those who were past 'official' retiring age still chose to contribute through work and identified it as a vital element in their life and one which still gave them happiness and satisfaction.

Work as a source of identity

In introducing themselves, many of the participants mentioned their work. Work appears to be an element in self-definition and self-identity for many, and some, like Robin and Rhianna, appear to define their life through reference to work:

Robin*: My name is Robin Colville em my life is doing the bakery in the morning and the press afternoons*

Rhianna*: I'm Rhianna and I live in Botton for many years and my life is candle making, gardening around here*

This close identification between self and work helps create a positive self-image through linking the self to something that is perceived by others to be of importance and of value.

Work as a source of well-being

Work was identified as a source of well-being: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. Life without work was viewed negatively, as something which not only results in boredom but is also *'bad for you'.* As Keiran puts it:

I'd be quite depressed if I had no work. Because work stops me from falling into a depression. I would feel that I'm, my life is not worth living, if I had no work. I'd be very depressed.

Work provides meaning, purpose and value to life. Life without work is viewed at best, as less good and at worst, as a cause of depression. Work gives reasons for living and in so doing fulfils a need which is deeply spiritual.

Working for others

One dimension of people's work that seemed particularly important was the fact that it was done for others. In other words, there was a clear understanding that the work that people engaged in at Botton was creative; it was not just a series of tasks to be carried out in a mechanical fashion. Rather it was goal oriented and people felt they were making a contribution to the wider good: *I work in the garden, harvest all the vegetables, for the neighbourhood.*

Work was viewed as something not done only for the self, but also and firstly for others and for the community. Even those who had formally retired continued to work and to contribute to the good of the community. This sense of continuing to contribute was important for people. As Olive, who was 'retired' told us:

people who are retired are still allowed to work in whatever capacity they can otherwise you could just sit at home and you know…which is all very nice for a short while but even that, even as a retired person, to be able to contribute, to do something that somebody else would need.

One participant worked at the local community health centre where she was involved, amongst other things, in bathing and hair washing for those in the community who were no longer able to do so themselves. In such a direct form of 'service' it was hard not to connect the work done with its value for

others. Similarly, those growing food such as vegetables in the gardens were aware that these helped to feed others in the community. This pattern of work-as-contribution was echoed throughout the interviews; people cooked *for others*, did housework *for others,* farmed *for others* and so forth. This is quite an interesting digression from the cultural norm which tends to focus on work-as-earning. The Botton residents framed work quite differently: as service.

Such an ethos of work-for-others is of course central to the ethos of the Camphill communities, but it seemed to be easily assimilated into the lives of the residents. As Keiran asserts: *We actually work for each other in the community.*

Creativity and ownership versus 'busyness'

This emphasis on work-as-service is important. A criticism that could be levelled at village communities such as Aberdeen and Botton is that they are based on mindless routine wherein people simply repeat the same tasks day in day out, with no real sense of ownership, goal or creative aspect. It was clear from our discussion with residents that this was far from the case. People had a strong sense of ownership over the product of their work. They understood the process and were clear about the nature and final location of the items that they produced. Even those whose work did not have immediate impact on those around them - those producing toys in the wood workshop and doll workshop or exercise books in the press - were all aware of and connected to the consequences of their work. They had an understanding of where their work was headed, whether a doll for the little girl in Denmark, the local school or international toy outlets.

Interviewer*: Do you know why you like working Brett? What, what does it give you working?*

Brett*: Well it means that I can supply something to somebody… Yeah oh well we have America, the Continent, not so much on the Continent. We*

have various people in Europe, we have Japan, and Japan is always a large order
Derek*: Packing up in trunks because we send our tools across the world to South Africa and then back*

This awareness of the ultimate outcome of people's work increased their connection to the work and their satisfaction with it:

Interviewer*: How important is your work to you?*
Keiran*: It's quite important to me because, because if I didn't, if I didn't bake the bread the community wouldn't get, the community wouldn't get any loaves*
Iris*: Yes. We often get photos of the children with the dolls. em I never got one from Denmark but we got a letter to say 'thank you' for the doll em So it was very nice that it landed there and the mother was very pleased with it*
Interviewer*: Does that make you feel good about what you're…?*
Iris*: Very pleased*

In contrast to those who might suggest that the type of work engaged in by the Botton residents was simply 'busyness', that is, tasks designed simply to keep people busy with no creative outcome, we found people who engaged in work with full knowledge of what it was, its value to the community and who would benefit from it. In this sense work was a deeply meaningful experience which bestowed meaning and value to people's lives. It is therefore not particularly surprising that people associated it with spirituality.

Part of the reason for this connection relates to the type of economy at Botton. In a land based community setting such as Botton, many of the participants' work was strongly linked to supplying their food. There was a close interconnectedness between producer and consumer; indeed at times they were one and the same. Therefore, it was relatively straightforward for

people to see the direct consequence of their work and to take their responsibilities seriously.

Work was also seen as an opportunity to connect and contribute to those beyond the community and as such seemed to it seemed to affirm people's worth as valued members of society:

Interviewer*: So in what ways is work important to give you a sense of meaning and purpose in your life would you all say?*
Arthur*: Because you meet somebody, that comes… It's like I work in the seed workshop. We do sell the seeds down in the gift shop but also when people come in personally to buy them off you in the seed workshop, they ask you for a catalogue, and then they start talking to you*
Interviewer*: So making that human contact that's important for you in your work?*
Arthur*: Yes, yes*
Liam*: People are more interested in what we're your doing*

Work as an informal spiritual practice

Taken together, the perspective that people gave to us on work led us to think of work as an *informal spiritual practice*. We might think of a spiritual practice as any activity that one associates with cultivating one's spirituality. An informal spiritual practice is an action or series of actions that act together in order to cultivate an individual's or a community's spirituality. Unlike the types of formal spiritual practice that we will be exploring below, informal spiritual practices are not structured or necessarily intentional. They simply occur as part of one's day-to-day life. The ways in which people described work and associated it with spirituality indicated to us that work functioned as an informal spiritual practice; one which gave not only a sense of meaning, value and purpose, but also peace:

Interviewer*: So that kind of feeling that you described, can you tell me a bit more about it? About working with the animals? What, what does that give you..?*
Euan: *Gives me a sense of…of warmth and openness and love towards the animals*
Interviewer*: Mmhm*
Euan*: and em also I find that if something's not quite right with me when I'm milking I feel that the cows can, can sense it and they draw that out of me and then I'm usually calm afterwards*
Interviewer*: When do you feel most relaxed and at peace with yourself would you say?*
Arthur*: When you've done a satisfactory job and even when the house parent, house mother says 'You've done a good job' but you know, inside you feel you've done a good job as well without them saying so and when you do cleaning you know you're not only doing it for yourself but for the rest of the people that you live with and that also gives you a good feeling*
Interviewer*: So working in the garden outside that's something that helps you feel at peace and relaxed?*
Rhianna *: well yes peace and relaxed and if Hilary asks? more onion to do we sit, relax, do the onions or if not doing onions, sit, relax, herbs we're doing different sort of herbs*

For Euan and Rhianna peace seems to relate more directly to the work itself, which is relaxing and peace creating, whereas for Arthur the peace comes from a job well done.

Given the setting of Botton, it was surprising that the theme of nature did not emerge as significant in the way that it had done in Aberdeen. However, reflecting on this vignette, it may be that the significance of nature is subsumed under the significance of work. The geographical location means that one is closely tied into the other. Over all the idea of work seemed to be

a prominent aspect of people's perceptions of spirituality and an informal, non-religious spiritual practice.

Other Aspects of Spirituality

Having spent some time exploring two modes of informal spiritual practice, we must now turn our attention to some of the other associations that people highlighted as significant to their understanding of spirituality. Here we will explore aspects of spirituality which have a more familiar ring and which draw from, but are not defined by, particular religious and philosophical systems.

The 'Unseen'

The idea of mystery was a perception that came up time and again as people wrestled with what spirituality might mean for their lives. A common theme that ran though our conversations was that spirituality was a dimension of existence that was 'unseen'. In like-manner to the ways in which the Camphill Aberdeen co-workers had expressed the intangibility of spirituality, so also the Botton residents expressed a sense of mystery and unseenness as having something important to do with spirituality. As Olive put it:

> *Spirituality has something to do with what you can't see. But it underlies actually the whole of life because, I mean, where does life come from? It doesn't come from the earth. There must be something that's making it come from somewhere. It's a very important part of life. I can't imagine life without it*

Here spirituality is clearly defined in terms of an invisible and creative life force without which life makes no sense. And yet, as Connor notices, that life force is not 'somewhere else'. Rather it is here, amongst us, intangible through the senses, but accessible and transformative via faith:

I'd like to say that eh also what Olive has just said. That em you can't you can't see with this one. That can't see the second coming of Christ, you can't see Him but you know that He's there. Even though He doesn't walk amongst us now as he did 2000 years ago but you know He's there amongst us somewhere doing, just showing His presence in the sort of spiritual realms rather than the, being on the earth a man like we are here now.

This is an interesting statement. Connor draws on imagery from the Christian tradition to express his belief that God is amongst us; that spirituality is unseen, but very much present. At one level there appears to be what he describes as '*the spiritual realms'* but at another level, he seems to assume that God in Christ is amongst us and actively doing something. The paradox here is only apparent, as this is precisely the types of teaching that are available within the Christian tradition where God is assumed to be both present, through the Holy Spirit, and absent, insofar as God remains mysterious and 'still to come'. The point to keep in mind here is that God is both unseen and at the same time present and active. The importance of this point will become clear later.

God

One obvious but important aspect of the 'unseen' was God. All of the groups that we worked alongside had ideas about or reflected in some way or another on God, although specific discussion about God's nature or attributes was more limited. Although at times there seemed to be a sense that the idea of God was somewhat remote for some, on the whole people had clear and very interesting ideas about God and what it meant to believe in a God. Some people expressed a strong belief in God:

Euan: *Yeah I, I believe…very strongly that there is a God and cause… em… cause that He created the earth, the earth, the world and I believe, I believe in that very strongly*

Keiran*: Well one thing I must say is that I've never heard God speak to me before and I've never seen Him neither but I believe He exists though because if God didn't exist we wouldn't exist*

Here we have the idea of God as the creative force that lies behind all things and makes sense of the world. A God who is unseen and in a sense 'silent', yet still an object that inspires and requires faith. As we began to probe a little further into precisely what people meant by the term 'god', it became quite clear that, on the whole, people's ideas were shaped by traditional Judaeo-Christian understandings. God was perceived in terms of being the one who:

- Holds the power of life and death and the 'keys' to the future*:*
  Rory*: I would say and… em… well ok I'm going to be 69 next year, 70. I don't know what's going to happen for later on. I'm afraid I can't answer that question. There's only one person who can answer that [laughs] and I'm afraid I can't.*

- Is the all powerful creator of the world:
  Keiran*: He's meant to be the powerful spiritual being that created the earth (***Jill***: yeah). That's what He is, I believe.*

- Who is good:
  Robin*: He's good*

- Who is overseeing human activity:
  because God does look down on you

- Who is the power to whom you pray:
  Interviewer*: Can you speak to God or not?*
  Robin*: Sometimes*
  Interviewer*: Sometimes. How do you do that Robin?*

Robin*: Well, I pray a lot*

- Who resides in heaven*:*
  Corinne*: I believe that He's up there somewhere*

The apparent simplicity of these beliefs does not take away from their spiritual potency for individuals or, as we will see when we look at spiritual coping later in this section, from their potential to support spiritual well-being.

Theological reflection

What was both interesting and surprising, was the level of theological reflection that people engaged in. People not only had clear and well-articulated god images, they were also wrestling with some of the big theological questions that perplex many people with an interest in religion.

Keiran*: The one thing that I'm not sure about is the em the religion my parents have, they are Christians but they believe that Jesus is God. But then there are other religions who don't believe Jesus is God. They believe he's the Son of God but my parents believe He is God and He's the Son of God. How can, how can God be his own Son? That's strange, that's really strange but I guess anything's possible with God. So of course He could no problem then…and He gave everyone freedom I think. But the one thing that confuses me is, is God dogmatic or not? I mean, I don't know. Is there reincarnation or is there heaven and hell? You don't know…*
And there's another thing that kind of bothers me with spirituality that some people say that God can't tolerate sin. And that means that if you, when you die and you haven't repented for the wrong things that you have done, He doesn't want anything to do with you anymore.

In these two abstracts, Keiran wrestles with some profound theological questions relating to the incarnation, the Trinity, inter-religious dialogue and

the omnipotence of God! The thing to notice here is that Keiran, whilst engaging in these reflections from a position of faith, clearly does not simply take as truth that which is given to him. He questions his faith and questions his parents' interpretation of their faith. For Keiran faith is not imposed on him by family or church but is something that he is free and willing to engage in critically and thoughtfully. In Keiran' case, the suggestion that faith is an imposition on a vulnerable person is clearly not justified.

A spiritual realm

The belief in a spiritual realm distinct from the physical world but yet intricately connected with it was a commonly expressed idea. For some this world was synonymous with heaven understood as a 'place' quite distinct from the world, for others the boundaries between the spiritual world and the physical world were not at all clear with one 'bleeding' into the other with regular frequency. This seemed to be particularly so at times of trauma and crisis. There was also, as we shall see below, a strong idea that this spiritual realm was in some way connected with death and the afterlife. In what follows we shall try to lay out something of the spiritual landscape that people offered to us and give the reader a sense of the richness and complexity of beliefs that people live with and work out. We will make no attempt at this stage to try to explain why they might believe what they do. We will spend some time thinking this through in the conclusion to this report. Here we simply want to try to report as accurately as possible the nature of the experiences that were gifted to us in the interviews.

Spiritual beings

It was clear that whilst traditional Christian ideas about God were important to some, such spiritual images were not the only ones that people mentioned in our conversations. God was perceived as unseen yet constantly active in the world. But He was not alone. People expressed beliefs that the world was populated by various spiritual beings and entities, all of whom in different

ways interacted with the lives of the living. Luke recounts his personal experience of angels:

Luke: *I got this angel and always,… well… I mean sometimes I see, in the night time I see the angel and you know there's this experience of that.*
Interviewer*: At night time?*
Luke*: Yeah and also… you don't, I mean you think the angel is in you and that's why I think, think and do of it.*

This is interesting. For Luke angels are real spiritual beings with which he has direct contact. They are both external to him (he can see them) and yet in a strange way internal (they are within him). In line with many spiritual traditions, Luke's encounter with the spiritual is at one and the same time outside of him and yet also part of him; both transcendent and immanent.

These spiritual beings were not passive but seemed to be actively involved in the day-to-day lives of people helping and guiding and looking after them through the complexities of their lives:

Rory*: I always felt that somebody was guiding me somewhere*
Interviewer*: Right ok. So in your recovery from it?* [serious road traffic accident]
Rory*: That's right, yes*
Interviewer*: And would that be related to, to God or a spiritual presence?*
Rory*: Yes yes I'm sure it is. I'm sure the angels must have been there to look after me [Laughs]*

Rory was, of course, being slightly flippant but his point relating to the active involvement of angels in his life was intended to be serious. This idea of a benevolent 'higher power' or 'spiritual being' who is involved with individual's lives and well-being was something that came up regularly. The persona of the 'angel' seemed to be a primary container for this particular belief. We will

reflect on some of the reasons why this might be the case in the conclusion to this report.

Individual spirit

Whilst there was a clear focus on spiritual beings which inhabited that strange position both within and outside of the person, others expressed a belief in 'spirit' understood as something that was personal and resided purely within the individual:

Arthur*: Well, somebody's spirit or well-being*
Interviewer*: So that, when you say somebody's spirit what idea do you have about that Arthur?*
Arthur*: Well, they got an inner well-being*

Arthur closely associated his sense of inner well-being with what might be described as his 'spirit'; that part of him that offers him a sense of identity and well-being that is not necessarily dependant on that which lies beyond him. Arthur's awareness of an internal locus of well-being which he described as 'his spirit' was evident in the perceptions of a number of the people with whom we spoke. Quite apart from the diverse and complex beliefs about spiritual beings who impacted upon people's lives, there was a general sense that human beings had an aspect to themselves - an aspect that had a profound impact on their lives - which they described as 'my spirit'. This, as we will see, became particularly important during our discussions about death, afterlife and reincarnation.

In line with observations on relationships, it is important to note that this idea of the spirit did not appear to be conceived in Cartesian, dualistic terms, i.e. that somehow the spirit is the *real* person and the body is simply a container for the spirit. Rather, whilst linguistically recognising that differing elements make up the human being - body, soul and spirit - the inner spirit of the person was perceived as being something more than the physical or

the psychological, yet intimately connected and indeed permeating both. In the same way as god and spiritual beings were intricately connected with the whole of people's lives, so also the individual spirit was connected to the whole of the person and from there into the world.

Death and the Afterlife

Some of the most lively and fruitful conversations emerged as people began to reflect on spirituality as it related to death and the afterlife. The experience of death is obviously an inevitable aspect of life for all people. But it is also a profoundly important spiritual marking point which shapes the way we live our lives in important ways. This was clearly the case for participants who saw the various issues surrounding death and the afterlife as deeply important for now and for the future. Our discussions around death and the afterlife revealed some clearly held beliefs and concepts but also some profound questions, uncertainty and confusion.

An interesting aspect of our conversations, in line with what we have previously observed about spirituality, is that people were not interested in engaging in discussions about death as an idea or an object for intellectual reflection. Throughout there was a strong element of personalisation when talking about death and life after death. People linked the discussion directly with themselves or loved ones who had died. As with spirituality, this 'intangible' concept was talked about in a concrete and deeply personal ways:

Euan*:…I do believe in reincarnation*
Interviewer*: Right, ok so do you believe that as well, Derek?*
Derek*: Yes, yes*
Euan*: … eh I mean in respect that em I believe that my mother will come back in another life em and that, that eh she won't be just a spirit up in the heavens. That I think she will come back down into another life*

For Euan reincarnation was not just a spiritual idea but a deeply held personal hope which he related directly to his dead mother. He was not interested in the doctrinal paraphernalia that surrounded the concept of reincarnation. His interest and his understanding was based on a deep seated hope that such a belief meant the possibility of not just a general reunion with 'the dead', but a specific reunion with his mother. In other words, the term 'reincarnation' has specific rather than general import. This is significant. In listening to the types of language that people used to describe what they think constitutes the realm of the spiritual, we noticed the frequent use of familiar religious/spiritual terms such as god, prayer, worship, reincarnation, heaven, angels and so forth. However, it was very clear that as we explored the deeper meanings that people attached to these concepts that these meanings tended to be quite personal. In other words, if we simply hear a term like 'reincarnation' and assume that we know what it means because we understand the tradition of Steiner, Buddhism or whatever presupposing framework we might hold, we will risk losing the deep personal meaning that is attached to the word by the individual. For Euan it was *personal hope* rather than particular doctrine or theology that provided the meaning for the term 'reincarnation'. The term therefore worked at an emotional/spiritual level rather than an intellectual one. Irrespective of the official party line on reincarnation, the term had deep and personal meaning for Euan. To miss this is to miss something highly significant. We will explore the importance of the tension between the individual and corporate interpretations of the spiritual later. For now, it is worthwhile noting that religious language has a corporate and an individual meaning and the two need not be the same or necessarily serve the same function.

Death

At one level, the idea of death seems quite straightforward. We live and then we die! However, something that is often not reflected on is the important fact that death is a deeply meaningful human experience. At its core it might represent the idea that at some point life as we know it will be no more: we

will die. But at other levels, death has deep and diverse meanings which very much impinge on the lives and expectations of the living. It will be helpful to keep this in mind as we reflect on people's experiences of death and their ideas of the afterlife.

Death, especially the death of parents or other relatives, emerged as a place where people discovered and recognised aspects of spirituality, both theirs and others. Indeed, for many it was in reflecting on issues of death that the word 'spirituality' began to make some sense. The death of parents was clearly a very traumatic event for people:

Bruce*: I also lost my mum and my dad.*
Interviewer*: Your mum and dad too, Bruce?*
Bruce*: They in heaven now…Yes really shocked, yeah.*
Interviewer*: Did it make you feel sad as well or…?*
Bruce*: Yes it did, it did…Losing my mum then, then my dad. Terrible!*

For some the meaning of the death of a parent or parents was closely tied in with their conception of home. The death of a parent not only left them relationally bereft, it also meant that, assuming they had no close relatives to whom they could go to, they now had no option other than to consider Botton Village to be their home. This disorientation and profound shift in identity that a person naturally experiences when they are bereaved, was compounded by the loss of another aspect of their lives which was crucial to their security and identity: their home. For some this meant moving from a self-perception of being, to some extent, an 'independent outsider', i.e. they had some distance from the community, to a new status as full-time resident. Depending on how a person previously viewed the idea of being a resident, will determine the nature of the adjustment that the person has to make to their new home and new identity. This is an important point that can easily be lost if we focus purely on the internal meanings of death to an individual. Death meant not only narrative reconstruction - recreating a new

story for themselves that now no longer includes the dead person in physical form – it also meant creating a new home. The two tasks are overlapping but the need for homefullness is easily overlooked.

The pain of the loss was clearly deep. This is summed up profoundly by Ivan. Throughout the focus group Ivan, who had some articulation difficulties, had said relatively little. But when he did speak what he said was poignant:

Interviewer*: Anything else about spiritual well-being or spirituality that people want to say?*
Ivan*: Miss mum and dad*
Interviewer*: You miss your mum and dad?*
Ivan*: Yeah*
Interviewer*: Are your mum and dad dead or do they live..?*
Ivan*: Up there.*
Interviewer*: Up there?*
Ivan*: God*
Interviewer*: In heaven?*
Ivan*: Yeah*

It was clear from Ivan's expression and body language that through this narrative fragment, he was articulating something that was deep and painful. And this was so for all of those who had gone through similar experiences:

Luke*: I went to the funeral of my dad …- and you know I was just down. And then my sister, my older sister and my youngest sister came to me, comfort me and I had also that shock of it and she said to me, 'All right Luke I understand you are feeling and I make you a nice hot chocolate for everybody and you too' and then I feel all right but I still feel better but I still got in here* [When Luke said 'in here' he placed his hand is over his heart] *on my, on my dad and also a friend of mine dad. Friend of ours who died just before my dad died 6 years ago*

Interviewer*: So when you say 'in here', you mean it still feels painful in there Luke, is that what you mean?*
Luke*: Yes it does. It's still there and it doesn't… sometimes it's in there and it doesn't go and it always stays in it. Like Rory said his mother died (***Rory***:Yes) and also that was a shock for Rory and also he probably has also this thing of it into him (***Rory***:Yes) and he can't get it out. People can't do that thing very much you know*

Death was clearly painful and anxiety provoking. However, people identified a number of important factors and strategies that were used to deal with this. For example, belief in and interaction with the spiritual world through prayer and belief that their loved ones were watching over them from heaven: *And also we all actually… we've got our parents looking upon you as well, look down. Also very important.*

We will explore this aspect more fully below in our discussion of the afterlife.

Retaining some connection with the departed loved ones through such things as prayer, and formal times of reminiscence was another way that people dealt with death the experience of death:

Luke*:* [I've been] *praying a lot because since I lost my dad 5 years ago,*
Interviewer*: But prayer is important for you (***Luke***: Yep) in remembering people that are dead?*
Luke*: That's right, that's right. I always do, I always think of my dad, always think of my uncle- my da…mum's, my dad's brother- always think of people, my old aunty, -my dad's sister- my old aunty, my 2 old aunties I mean*
Luke*: I always do, I always do listen to music because, classical music, because I follow my dad's tapes*
Luke*: No because when since my dad died, my dad used to listen to music and when I used to go and see him, I used to sit down and then listen got*

some music on and then I used to listen with him or sometimes watch it on television and then I get to be there
Interviewer*: So does that give you a connection to your dad then?*
Luke*: Yes*

This idea that prayer and reminiscing through such things as music was a healing experience after bereavement was echoed in the experiences of others:

Rory*: Occasionally I say the Lord's Prayer, which is nice. So that… it's very comforting to me*
Interviewer*: John how did you cope with your mum dying? How did you find comfort?*
Rory*: My mother gave me her hand and I think also I think music had got a lot to play in this kind of thing and you hear somebody like Pavarotti singing and eh and Domingo and voices… it just gets me, just about here* [indicating heart area]. *Anybody who really can really sing, has such a power that is and so it is unbelievable*
Interviewer*: So music can be something that can touch you deeply?*
Rory*: Yes exactly, oh yes, yeah*
Interviewer*: And can music then be a source of comfort?*
Rory*: Oh yes it can be a great one yeah, yes a great comfort*

Linked with this is the idea of remembrance. People spoke to us of the importance of formal services of remembrance that enabled them to bring their memories of their loved ones to the fore in a situation of relaxed ritual. We were told that such things as weekly services of remembrance and yearly 'evenings for the dead' led by priests from the Camphill Christian community were important and healing spaces wherein the processes of remembrance can come to the fore:

Interviewer*: Have you been to the evening for people who have died?*

Bruce*: Yeah and my dad's funeral and my mum's funeral … It helps*

Although such things as these could give help comfort the bereaved, ultimately the individual was left on their own with their loss and had to find ways to cope with it that suited their personal needs and experiences:

Interviewer*: When you lost somebody and you were feeling upset was the evening for the dead something that helped you to feel less upset Morag?*
Morag*: Well it did a bit but much, but not only that. I made Christmas cards or birthday cards. I made them and I like knitting and sorting out birthdays.*

Communal healing rituals certainly had their place in enabling people to cope with the spiritual crisis of death, but ultimately people discovered their own modes of healing, sometimes expressed in such simple creative acts as card-making or knitting. Having said all of this, people coped with the trauma in a variety of ways, some of which as mentioned involved the expression of deep grief, others of which involved a more pragmatic approach that seemed simply to accept death as part of life which had to be lived with:

Interviewer*: Did you feel sad when your grandmother and grandfather died?*
Colm*: I knew they got… you can't live for ever*
Elena*:I don't think of my mum anymore because she's gone and I've only got my sister and two nephews, two niece and I've got my friend Elspeth, who I haven't seen for ages and I got Diane at home. I'm not so bothered now, I'm just getting on really well without it.*

It is not our place here to explore the psychodynamics of grieving and why people choose to, or are prone to, grieve in the ways that they do. The important point we would like the reader to keep in mind is that, like

spirituality, death and coping with death has both universal and individual aspects. Although it is clearly a universal phenomenon, people understand death quite differently as individuals even within the same community. In order to offer effective spiritual care and support, both dimensions of death's meaning – the universal and the particular - need to be recognised, understood and worked with.

An eternal spirit

With these provisional thoughts on the meaning of death in mind, we can now move on to deepen our understanding by reflecting on other aspects of death and the afterlife that people brought to our attention. In line with a number of religious traditions, there was an underlying belief that there was some inner, indestructible part of the person that somehow continues after death. This part leaves the physical body on death and goes to the spiritual world:

Interviewer*: What part of you, when you die what part of you goes to heaven or goes..*
Lily*: I think it may be your soul that goes to heaven*
Euan*: Your soul*
Derek*: Your soul goes to heaven*
Interviewer*: Your soul? Right*
Derek*: Your body just rots into the earth*

There was, not surprisingly, some confusion as to whether that which left the body at the time of death was the person's spirit, their soul or both:

Keiran*: Well also when you, when the time comes when you die, when you leave your body behind you, you go up probably suppose to go up to the spirit world and all that.*
Interviewer*: So what do other people think about that? Is that a kind of belief that you would have or do you think something different from that?*

Corinne*: No, no that's what I believe*
Jill*: Yeah*
Keiran*: Well I believe your soul must leave your body because if your body's no use to your soul anymore what's the point of hanging on to it? I mean…It's like a type of energy or something, spirit energy*
Interviewer*: And that, but that's the bit that goes up to heaven*
Keiran*: Yeah*
Jill*: Yeah*
Keiran*: Which isn't, which is your actual consciousness. It goes out of your body, it goes up to heaven. So you actually leave your body behind. We are not our bodies. We are spiritual energy or something or consciousness or something*

Bearing in mind that philosophers and theologians have and continue to argue over the nature of the soul, its relationship to the spirit and the location of either or both prior to and after death, it is not surprising that there is a deal of confusion over this issue! The important point is that people felt that after death something essential moves from this life into the spiritual realm or world, the contours of which we have outlined previously.

This spiritual realm was often summed up in the language of heaven, conceived as a safe place where their loved ones who had died would no longer encounter suffering pain or anxiety. This belief offered a good deal of comfort. As Bruce put it: *My family have gone. My mum, father, two of my sisters they dead. They can't get ill again, they are…they're safe.*

Others referred to the spirit's final destination as the 'spiritual world;' the place where souls/spirits went after death:

Norma*: The spiritual world is up there*
Interviewer*: So when people, die then…*
Norma*: The spiritual world that's where they go.*

Interviewer*: They go to the spiritual world? And, and for you Norma …what part of them do you think goes to the spiritual world?*
Norma*: em… I don't really know that one*

In terms of formal belief systems, our participants presented their views on death and the afterlife under three rough metaphysical positions:

1. Traditional Christian belief
2. Reincarnation
3. Uncertainty

Traditional Christian belief

Here the assumption was that people would go to heaven to be with God. There were no ideas of rebirth or entering into a spiritual world which interfaced with this world in the ways we have previously indicated. We have already spent time looking at this in our previous discussion on god images. We won't spend any more time on this here other than to allow one of our participants, Kevin, to highlight an important difference between these traditional Christian beliefs and the beliefs in reincarnation that were quite prevalent throughout other conversations:

Kevin*: Differently. My, my mother she's gone up to heaven now. I can see her no more now*
Interviewer*: Right*
Kevin*: She's gone*
Interviewer*: And as far as you're concerned that's where she is, then?*
Kevin*: Yes I hope she would come back, I hope she would, I want her to come back*

Here Kevin expresses a view that differs from that of the others in his particular group who did have a belief in reincarnation. In Kevin's understanding, once people die they go to live in a different 'place'- heaven.

Those who remain alive cannot see those they have lost, but they can hold onto a belief that, as we have seen, they are 'safe' and 'free from suffering'. But they are not coming back. The living may move on to join the dead in heaven, but the movement is one way, from life to death to new life in heaven. Clearly, Kevin wants his mother to come back but within his belief structure that is not possible, despite the fact that those around him differed. He still longs for his mother, but at the same time recognises that any reunion will be a future event, that will occur after his own death. This is an important distinction. Both a belief in heaven and a belief in reincarnation bring hope, but in quite different ways, with quite different implications of how the belief should impact the life of the living. For one, this life is a once only opportunity. For the other, it is one of many opportunities that will come around.

Reincarnation

The assumption within the belief in reincarnation is that death is simply a doorway into new forms of life. Human existence does not end at death but instead it cycles, with each person returning to earth after death in a different physical form. The eternal spirit of a person does not die when the physical body does but has the capacity to be reborn again and again and to take on different physical forms in a number of lives. Reincarnation was discussed in detail in most of the groups but one group was particularly interested in this area and asked for some extra time to discuss it at the end of the session. This was clearly an area of genuine interest to the Botton residents. In line with what has been suggested previously, the nature of the discussion tended to be embodied rather than theoretical. As Alice put it:

Well reincarnation is really like if you em you come back as another person you have to be reincarnated and reincarnated but reincarnation for me is like, if I came back, if I was… if I started getting reincarnated so many times I would come back as another person.

One participant, Lee, explained reincarnation in this way:

Lee*: It's a bit like a mirror isn't it?*
Interviewer*: In what way Lee?*
Lee*: Because you see two, two people, both the same. Yourself in the mirror and then there's person besides what's yourself and you can see that. Also in reincarnation… I mean it's something to do with that as well. But you're just one person*

Lee uses the idea of 'a mirror image' as a metaphor for the way in which he understands reincarnation to work itself out in people's lives. Viewed in this way reincarnation is perceived as different 'images' of a person's true self. There is the one core 'true self' which has continuity through time, although it takes on different images in various lives.

Others used language which was more poetic and evocative:

Lily*: Like in the summer, when the flowers die in the winter, the flowers come back in the Spring and have new life*
Derek*: It's like the Fir trees. You find that they, the trees shed their leaves down on the floor. You find after Christmas the trees are forming the buds and the leaves come back again*
Interviewer*: So that's a bit like what you think happens to humans (***Derek***: Yeah) When you die then there's a new life comes?*
Derek*: Yeah*
Lily*: And as I said, like a flower we come back to new life*

These illustrations from nature offered to explain the life/death/life cycle and gave people a profound assurance of new life after death. New life is part of the natural order of things, as reliable as the seasons. As such, it is a deep source of hope. There is of course a sense in which these statements apply

to both the Christian understanding of life after death and to reincarnation, for Derek the former and for Lily the latter.

The soul/spirit distinction we highlighted previously came to the fore in our discussions on reincarnation, with s*pirit* being perceived as the essence of the individual which continues after death and is reborn, and *soul* being understood as the feelings which are shed after death releasing the spirit. Death was thus seen as a freeing of the 'true self' -the spiritual self - through the shedding of the physical body and the soul:

Interviewer*: What for you happens in reincarnation Lee?*
Lee*: Because we do come back because its, its entering into our own soul, and its entering our own souls and you could say our own physical soul and something to do with karma because karma is also into this… Because when you died your physical body will get tense, will be tensed but also you get free, you are also free in the spiritual world and you feel much more, you know, you're there, you feel like you're in your own self.*
Interviewer*: So when you die are you saying you become who you really are?*
Lee*: yeah*
Interviewer*: Then the spiritual part of you is freed? Is that what you're saying?*
Lee*: Yeah. Freed*
Interviewer*: And what happens then to that spiritual part of you?*
Lee*: You're freed from your soul and then your soul will go up back where the stars are. That's what I'm saying.*
Interviewer*: OK. And then, we have reincarnation…or what?*
Lee*: Then after that you get reborn again*

There seemed to be a variety of ideas that revolved around the concept of reincarnation. Barbara saw it as a form of being reborn into another situation: '*You won't come back here. You can go somewhere else in the*

world'. Here reincarnation involved a clear geographical as well as a metaphysical movement. Most assumed that reincarnation was something that everyone would face at some point in their journey through life and death. However, it was not something that simply happened by chance. There appeared to be the presumption that a degree of choice was involved:

Interviewer*: And what determines what kind of body you come back in or where you go in the world? What makes that decision or who makes that decision or…*
Alice*: It's us that makes that decision*
Lee*: It affects everybody, every one of us*
Interviewer*: So the true us in each of us makes that decision, is that what…*
Alice*: yeah*
Lee*: Yes*
Alice*: If we don't make that choice, then what's the point?*
Interviewer*: What's the point of this life or…?*
Alice*: What's the point of this life when we haven't…*

How important this belief was for the day-to-day life of individuals was hard to ascertain. People were unable to articulate precisely how it influenced their day-to-day behaviour and choices or their quality of life. They did however indicate that the belief in reincarnation gave them some form of security insofar as it emphasised and reinforced the idea that if things go wrong in this life, there is another possibility to do things differently and hopefully better in the next life. The idea of continuity and connectedness to past and future lives also seemed to help people to invest their present lives with meaning, purpose, hope and value. One thing that it is important to point out is that the idea of reincarnation was overwhelmingly conceived of as positive and life-enhancing. We will return to the theme of reincarnation in our later reflections on the Stourbridge communities. Here it is important to point out one thing. There was absolutely *no* suggestion that a person's

current life state was in any way a punishment for past life or that reincarnation was progressive or a movement away from disability. It seemed to be a choice in which the individual's 'true self'/'spiritual self' had participated and had 'control' over.

Uncertainty

The final metaphysical position that people adopted in relation to the afterlife was one of uncertainty. Some people seemed unsure about the reality of the views expressed in points one and two. They felt that they would like to believe in such things but were not sure enough to make a commitment. A number of people could see the attraction of the idea of reincarnation but remained uncertain as to where they stood on the issue. Corinne expressed this position thus: '*Em…, reincarnation; not entirely sure about it. But I do, I do often actually ponder and think about things like that, yeah'*

Corinne had some doubt about reincarnation but did think about it and could clearly see it as a possibility. Lily was more forthright and expressed an obvious wistful longing to believe in it: '*Well I'm just hoping me grandma will come back the same way in the spiritual way come back down to earth'.*

Lily's statement is really a hybrid between the Christian view and the views on reincarnation expressed by others. She wants her grandma to '*come down'*, indicating that she is 'up there', which is the type of phraseology used by her to indicate the spatial location of heaven. She also wants her to '*come back'*, but not in a new body or as a new person, but precisely as she remembered her. This strikes us as probably an expression of grief that reveals a wish to be reunited with a loved one channelled through an amalgamation of Christian views and implicit understandings of the meaning of reincarnation. In a spiritually plural context, Lily, like many of us, brings together a number of spiritual perspectives in an attempt to cope with her loss.

Taken together the data strongly suggested that the belief that death was not the end seemed to be a significant source of comfort and a very important place where spiritual beliefs were honed out, challenged and worked through.

Spiritual practices

The experiences and perspectives that we have reflected on thus far found their more formal practical outworking in the various spiritual practices that the Botton residents engaged in. Some of these practices were clearly religious in origin, although, as we shall see, even when a practice had a religious root, people understood its meaning in ways which resonated with the religious tradition but often differed from it in subtle, but important, ways. The spiritual practices explored below, church going, studying the bible, prayer and celebrating the festivals, seemed to be the primary means by which people concretised and worked out their spirituality in ways which enhanced their spiritual well-being, understood within the terms outlined in section one of this report. In terms of the formal spiritual practices that are located specifically within the Botton community and which are explored below, there are indications that in recent years the form of these practices and the frequency of their occurrence has been shifting and changing, with traditional modes of spiritual expression proving to be less satisfactory and less well used than in previous times.

Church going and involvement

The most commonly identified spiritual practice was the practice of church going. Some attended the community church, but others went to churches within the wider community. There was a range of attendance patterns and degrees of involvement. Some attended church regularly and clearly used it as a primary mode of spiritual nurture. Some did not attend church at all (some of whom were lapsed attenders), although these people appeared to be in the minority. Others attended primarily at times of special events such as Christmas or Easter. There was a group of people who fell somewhere in

the middle, attending irregularly but more frequently than simply for special events. It was not always clear precisely why they attended church. As Lily put it: *'Yes. I went a couple of Sundays ago –and that's quite nice -if I remember to go'.* The idea that church is '*quite nice'* would indicate that she may well see church in the same way as she sees a 'nice' social activity. It's a place you go from time to time to be with people, listen to music and so forth. For the people in this group, church attendance did not necessarily have formal spiritual importance. Again, it is worth pointing out that this is not particularly unusual. It has been noted that people watching the BBC's *Songs of Praise* religious programme tend to watch it for entertainment value rather than spiritual nourishment. People just like the music! So there is nothing particularly unusual about residents who simply go to church occasionally because it is a nice experience. Many people do this.

Some of our participants regularly attended the Christian community church in Botton each Sunday. Some of those were very involved in the church as members and servers:

Vincent*: We go church me and Tony…a really good church*
Interviewer*: You enjoy the service*
Vincent*: Yes. I go on Tuesday. I go by myself…Tony don't need to go, Tony*
Interviewer*: So Tony goes as well? There's a Tuesday service as well as a Sunday service?*
Tony*: That's if I'm serving*

Euan saw his participation in the church as an important way of feeling involved (as opposed to being an onlooker), within the community. As he put it *'I'm totally involved because I'm one, I'm one of the servers'.* There is an obvious but interesting difference between the approaches to church going of Vincent, Euan and Tony. Church seems to be an important part of Vincent's life quite apart from any formal duties he may have to perform. He attends

two services each week and seems well motivated to participate as a worshipper. Tony attends church on Tuesday only if he has the responsibility of being a server. Euan seems much more focussed on the importance of service-as-involvement. This might indicate the ways in which people use religious practices, such as church going, in quite different ways. Vincent seems to be motivated by a more obvious spiritual impulse to participate in the church and to worship regularly. Tony and Euan seem to see church more in terms of its value as a place where they have responsibility for a specific task. The responsibility of being a server was an obvious source of value insofar as they were needed and their role was valued, but it may not have had direct spiritual importance to them. The thing to take from this discussion is that although people seem to be engaging in similar spiritual practices, the actual meaning of the practices for them is individual and not necessarily related to the spirituality of the particular church they are involved with. In other words, knowing that someone goes to church tells us some things but can also blind us to other dimensions. It's not enough to know simply that someone engages in the practice of church going. We need to know the meaning of the practice for the individual.

<u>Issues people raised with regard to the Christian community church</u>

It should be noticed that non or irregular attendance at the community church should not necessarily be taken to mean that church per se was not an important element in people's lives. There were clearly other influencing factors. Some people articulated some discomfort with the way services were set up and carried out. People explained that they often didn't understand what was going on within the services or that the type of liturgy and worship offered by the Christian community service was not what suited their spiritual needs:

Norma*: All my family are Catholics we always go to church on a Sunday. Here I go to church but I don't understand it very well*

Interviewer*: Why is it you find that you enjoy that better than the service here do you think?*
Norma*: I think it more … with the Catholic church it's more sort of Catholic. I think this church is very confusing because the way that they do the service, the way that they do this, is sort of like that and whatever. (***Oliver***: Not used to it) I just don't understand it at all*
Interviewer*: Whereas you understand the Catholic service?*
Norma*: Yeah, because I am a Catholic*

Some found it upsetting insofar as it was so different from the church in which they were brought up. This seemed to cause a degree of distress, confusion and an inability to connect with what was going on. This extended conversation will help to illustrate this point:

Derek*: I don't go to the* [community church] *service no more anymore because ...it's it's just too long and sitting there*
Iris*: I think mainly when I go to church spirituality comes in quite a lot to what you do in the service in the church*
Interviewer*: And is that the church here that you go to Iris or …?*
Iris*: I go to a Catholic church*
Interviewer*: and do you go there regularly Iris?*
Iris*: Not regularly. I go there at least once maybe two months or something.*
Interviewer*: …In between times do you go to the church here at all or…?*
Iris*: I have tried*
Interviewer*: But you're…?*
Iris*: But I can't, I don't seem to be able to follow it*
Interviewer*: Were you brought up in the Catholic Church?*
Iris*: Yes*
Interviewer*: So is that more comfortable..?*
Iris*: yeah*
Ivan*: Not like it.* [Christian Community service in Botton]

Interviewer*: You don't like it*
Ivan*: No*
Interviewer*: What do you not like about it, Ivan do you know?*
Ivan*: Upsets me*
Interviewer*: It upsets you*
Ivan*: yeah*
Interviewer*: going to the service? So you don't go then?*
Ivan*: No*
Interviewer*: Do you go to any other church?*
Ivan*: yeah*
Interviewer*: Yes? Which church do you go to?*
Ivan*: Roman Catholic church*

It was not entirely clear what it was that caused Ivan's distress. Nevertheless, if we listen carefully to this conversation the two key things that seem to put people off is the fact that they find it difficult to understand and to follow and that it is clearly different in significant ways from that which they are used to and comfortable with.

Part of the problem also was an unfamiliarity with the particular ways in which certain practices were carried out. For example, Oliver felt that the prayers offered within the Christian community church were not really prayer, primarily because they were not connected to kneeling, and that the songs that were sung were not identifiable hymns:

Oliver*: Well you see in the Christian community service you don't have* [prayer]*, you actually sit the whole time except when you stand up for reading of the gospel (***Morag***: That's true) there's no kneeling to say prayers. Everything is said by the priest*
Interviewer*: So prayer is not a big feature of the service?*

Oliver*: The service isn't any. It's... it's everything you… I think you're supposed to… to have your own thoughts and the priest um you know the priest actually says the whole service*
Oliver*: well sort of um rounds that have been written. (***Morag***: I see) Usually written I think by people in Camphill haven't they? A few words and not like singing a hymn.*

It would appear that, taken as a whole, people's concerns revolved around the fact that the services are really too distant from the religion of their childhood for them to identify with. This to some extent prevents them from engaging in the proceedings in ways which are spiritually enhancing.

Even those who attended the community church with some regularity highlighted similar issues and felt that the Christian community service was noticeably different from mainstream Christian churches. The form of the service, the citation of different creeds and the expressed belief in reincarnation were highlighted as points of dissonance. People described the service as having a set format which does not change and which is strongly ritualised and symbolic:

Interviewer*: So the priests have changed. Has the service changed over the years?*
Brett*: No the service doesn't change.*
Interviewer*: It's the same?*
Brett*: It's a set service.*

The Christian community service tended to be described in a fairly detached manner and although some expressed enjoyment of it, others were ambivalent. The only element of the service which appeared to offer a sense of connection was communion. Some people highlighted this as the most important part of the service:

Bruce: *I like the bread and wine best*
Interviewer: *and when you receive communion what's important about that for you?*
Elena: *em it's very good. I like it*
Vincent: *I like it*
Interviewer: *you like it. Can you think what it is you like about it? Does it give you a particular feeling or is it taking part…*
Elena: *a good feeling*
Interviewer *A good feeling inside?*
Elena: *Yeah*

Listening to how people perceived this element of the service, it would be reasonable to assume that people's satisfaction with this aspect relates to the fact that it is the one part of the service where they are encouraged to personally participate; the part of the service where they are recognised as individuals. The other elements of the service were distant, ritualised and conducted by the priest and the servers at the front of the church, with the congregation as onlookers. In the intimacy of communion, that distance is broken down and people are enabled to express their spirituality in ways which are tangible and meaningful:

Norma: *I think in a way in the Catholic Church you don't have the juice or the wine but here somehow they give you the bread and they give you the wine or the juice whatever and then they say…*
Bruce: *be blessed*
Oliver: *give a blessing*
Norma: *sort of…*
Oliver: *peace be on you, peace be with you*
Norma: *they sort of put, Janet (***Oliver**: *the priest here) sort of puts her hand on you and says 'peace be with you' or something …it's confusing because in the Catholic church you would not do that, not at all*
Interviewer: *So that's communion?*

Oliver*: Communion you're given the bread, the wine and then the priest (***Norma***:blessing) comes down the line again, a third time and to put a, puts a finger on the side of your face and says 'peace be with you'*
Interviewer*: Right. When that happens is there anybody experiences anything inside when that happens?*
Norma*: I don't think so*
Interviewer*: You don't? OK. Anybody else?*
Oliver*: Well I think you em em ??? exactly saying what you exactly experience but em [pause]*
Interviewer*: Is there something significant about that?*
Oliver*: I would say that, yes taking the um, um words, what you feel, there's a certain atmosphere*

It was hard for people to identify precisely what it was that they received from the communion, but it was clear that despite its inarticulability, it was spiritually important to them.

Having said all of this, one participant declared that without the Christian community Botton would not be Botton, although he also said that he is no longer a regular attender:

It's an important part of every, of Botton. Without the church Botton wouldn't be Botton because every Sunday you get about 60 or 70 people in the church

This is probably an important point to bear in mind. The presence of the community church makes a big statement as to the importance of spirituality to the Botton community. The problem seems to be that the church does not capture the vibrancy and diversity of people's spiritual experiences. The issue may be that there is a need for the church to reflect the experiences and desires of the residents in its worship, liturgy and practices.

Attending church outside of the community

Obviously people had other options. They could attend a church elsewhere if they so desired. However, because of the geographical location of Botton, attending a church outside of the community was not such an easy thing to do. The practicalities of arranging transport and organising people to accompany church goers meant that often the residents either went to the Botton service or did not go to any service of worship:

Interviewer*: But people have the choice to go there?*
Lily*: I always go here in Botton because it's nearer*
Derek*: Yes*
Lily*: When I'm at home with me parents we go to the St Lawrence church where we live in our village at home cause I don't like this church.*

People had the choice to go elsewhere, but clearly in practice that choice was limited by geography and logistics.

Studying the Bible

The spiritual practice of church going is clearly a complex and changing phenomenon as is the second identified spiritual practice that people brought to our attention: the practice of bible study. Formal and communal study of the bible has long been established as an aspect of Camphill life which has spiritual significance. This remained so for Botton although the popularity of this mode of spiritual expression seemed to be changing. Within the Botton community there were two outlets for bible study:

1. the bible evening (held within individual households)
2. regular gospel study (led by the priest).

It seemed clear that the practice of bible study was perceived as primarily located within these two meetings. No one mentioned individual study of the bible and only one person referred to studying any other religious or spiritual

books. Participants indicated that there had been changes in the format and frequency of bible evening from its early years, changes which everyone thought were for the better:

Brett*: We meet at say, well I'm going to give you a time, 7 o'clock for quarter past. Means you go into the sitting room and sit quietly. When you go into supper, which is whatever the meal is meant to be then you go from there, you clear the table, you read the bible and discuss the bible passage. It's takes about an hour and a half, two hours. But it's not the original bible evening. I'd better explain that. The original bible evening when I came to Botton was you met at a given time for quarter of an hour, went into the dining room, sat at a table where … on you plate there was a bun about that size, and a glass of red juice and salt. And we had that and then we talked about various things and then we had the bible, discussed it and it lasted about two hours. So it was called the Camphill Bible evening. But then Dr König said 'This is not going to do. You'd better make it this way. Have your supper incorporated in bible evening'*

Interviewer*: So you eat together as part of bible evening?*

Brett*: Yes. The old-fashioned Bible evening was such that not everyone was allowed to go to it.* [Now] *Everyone, anyone can go to the supper and the bible evening, it's not quite the same. But the old fashioned bible evening was down to 28 people went to it and the rest were, had something else on, because they weren't… it was too much for them*

Interviewer*: Ok so do you think that's a good change Brett that everybody can go if they wish?*

Brett*: Yes it's definitely a good change cause you're not going to have your meal and the Bible evening starting half past eight at night. For farmers that gets too late*

Brett, still saw the bible study as an important aspect of his life; a place where he could eat together with others, where the bible could be studied and which also accommodated the working life of the community.

For Morag the preparation and rituals surrounding bible evening seemed as significant as studying the bible itself. It was an opportunity to be peaceful, to set aside time that was different for the norm. There was also the sense of security in the ritual, symbolic and communal aspect of a shared experience:

Morag*: and then coming up to the other part which is like in the sitting room with the candle on. Again making this peace peace. You just sit in silence and then when Terry gets up, he's our house father, he takes the flame, from the actual candle flame into the dining room and light another candle flame and then we stand, Alison says a verse, then we sit around the table and then we eat what we've actually prepared*

Whilst it was clear that this particular practice had some continuing relevance, attendances at the bible evening varied and it continued to be subject to on-going change: '*We try to have it every week but if other things get in the way we don't have it'.*

Prayer

The third formal spiritual practice that people identified as particularly significant was prayer. By the term 'prayer', we mean a formal address to a deity done either directly on one's own or within a community of people. A wider understanding of the word 'prayer' could easily be applied to many of the spiritual experiences that we described earlier. Here our focus is on formal, intentional spiritual practices.

Prayer was mentioned in a variety of contexts: church, crisis, daily grace and so forth. It was understood in different ways and was emphasised strongly by some and not at all by others. The following will give a sense of the diversity of people's prayer experiences:

Intercession

Tony saw prayer as something which was primarily done in church, that is prayers carried out in public. The particular form which he saw as being a priority were prayers of intercession:

Tony*: Well the service is all, the service itself? Mmm. Pray for the world, talk to Jesus Christ and God*
Interviewer*: OK. So part of the service is praying?*
Tony*: Praying for, I don't know, praying for the world, praying for your family, em thinking about other people who are not as well off as we are.*
Interviewer*: Right ok*
Tony*: I mean poor people like in Africa and in places where there's a lot of war and we shouldn't have it we should be more in a way more peaceful not always falling out with each other and fighting and killing. It doesn't do any good really.*

Tony's closing comment, *'It doesn't do any good really' w*as a reflection on the futility of war and not a statement about the pointlessness of prayer! He, like many others believed that prayer was a form of speech directed to God, and the expectation was that God could and would actually do something about the situations referred to in prayer. Tony had a clear sense of the injustice of the world and a genuine belief that prayers offered in public could make a difference.

Prayer as blessing

Oliver*: Oh the whole thing is we have a sort of bible em we say grace at the meals (***Morag***: Oh yeah) Lunch, supper and, and we also have usually either a reading*

These forms of prayer were well integrated within the life of the community. They were not reflected on, they simply happened as a natural part of the community's routine and rhythm.

Praying in times of personal trouble/trauma

These prayers would come to the fore when, for example someone lost a loved one or encountered other situations of stress, anxiety or loss. As Rhianna put it*: 'If anyone has lost a parent like I have or … I just had to have a prayer'.*

Personal private prayer

We saw that Tony focused on public prayer. Robin on the other hand viewed prayer as a personal and a private matter:

Robin*: Well, I pray a lot*
Interviewer*: You pray a lot?*
Robin*: yeah in my room*
Interviewer*: What kind of things do you pray about?*
Robin*: [pause 20 secs] That's a bit difficult.*
Interviewer*: Is it about things that are going on in your life or particular things?*
Robin*: All my life.*

For Robin personal prayer was an important and integral part of his life; it was a space where he could relate to God the various experiences that he encounters in his day-to-day life. For some private prayer often tended to occur in the context of some difficulty that they had encountered. Luke for example informed us that he had been '*praying a lot … since I lost my dad 5 years ago'.* Such personal prayer was aimed at opening up a connection with God in order to talk over troubles.

For others, prayer did not really play a significant role in their lives:

Interviewer*: Is prayer at all part of your life or not really, Corinne?*
Jill*: Not really*
Keiran*: We do say graces at the table*

Interviewer*: Is prayer any part of your life Corinne?*
Corinne*: No, not really. Not apart from when I go to the service on Sunday*

Overall prayer was described as a useful spiritual practice although it worked itself out in diverse and quite complex ways.

Celebrating festivals
The final formal set of spiritual practices that people highlighted were the various festivals that the community celebrates. This was not a particularly strong spiritual theme. The main relevance of the festivals seemed to relate to the provision of a framework for the year within which certain markers, Easter, Michaelmas, Christmas and so forth, gave a sense of orientation and continuity to people's lives. As this was not a theme that people chose to develop particularly fully, we will not spend time on it here other than to acknowledge in a similar way to our experience in Aberdeen, that the festivals did in some sense mark out and give cohesion to the rhythm and routine of the Botton community.

Space for self: an unrecognised, informal spiritual practice
Whilst these 'formal' spiritual practices were recognised by all within Botton, a form of unacknowledged/unrecognised informal spiritual practice emerged –that of space for self. For some of the residents, free time, which was not structured and lay outside the normal routine of work or organised activities, appeared to be essential in enabling them to find a sense of inner peace and 'self-connection'. This has already been identified as a having relevance for spiritual well-being amongst Newton Dee residents. 'Time for self' was not solely time for relaxation, although it could encompass that, but it held a particular significance in enabling self-awareness and self-development:

Liam: *em I think you feel more relaxed in yourself in the evening when you can just be by yourself. That's when you get, then you're not so*

tensed up because you've had quite an active day and then you've sort of got to slow down gradually. So at the end of the day it sort of eases off
Interviewer*: So there's work time at Botton and then there's also time when you've got time for yourself? Is that important to you to have these two different types of time?*
Liam*: Well definitely because then you're, you're concentrated for most of the day in your basic work that you do every day and then in the evening, then in the evening it's more time to yourself and that's your time for your own life*

Liam identifies his free time as '*time for your own life*' –in the sense of time for developing an identity apart from his work identity, the community identity and others. Time to find out who he is, where he is going and why. Connor makes the same point in a different way:

I also think sometimes that it's just good to have some times at the end of the day to have a few minutes just to go and relax and think of how your day has been and if there is something that you think you could have done better, you think of all the possibilities that there are that you can get around it and you think 'yes I could have done it in such and such and then you know it might work like that'.

It was clear that for both Liam and Connor this time for self held a spiritual significance in providing space for peace, for self-reflection, and for exploring ways to move forward with their lives.

It was interesting that some also expressed frustration that so much of potential free time is filled with organised activities, placing them in the position of having to choose between their own needs and community expectations. It was telling that one participant equated free time with freedom – drawing attention to its deeper spiritual significance in her life:

Norma*: I think in a way if it's every Sunday things are on you just don't you don't just have enough time on your own*
Interviewer: and *is that something you like or something you wish it wasn't like that Norma?* [in relation to organised activities in Botton]
Norma*: Well you don't seem to get enough, enough time free sometimes*
Interviewer*: So sometimes you'd like a bit more…*
Norma*: Freedom sometime*

There is a somewhat wistful longing in Norma words, '*freedom sometime'*. This draws attention to an important point, namely that for free time to function as supportive of spiritual well-being, as implicit in the narratives of Liam and Connor, it needs to be experienced as truly 'free', i.e. time in which the individual can choose how to spend it, unfettered by the expectations and value judgements of others. It seemed that this was not always the case.

The need for space for self had also been recognised amongst the Newton Dee residents as contributing to spiritual well-being and will be further explored with the Botton co-workers.

Community living

It was clear that for the participants their life in Botton community was significant in supporting their spirituality and spiritual well-being. This was not expressed in any conceptualised relationship between community living and spirituality, but rather in the concrete experiences which people described. Community living provided opportunities for:

- Purposeful living
- Confirmation of place
- Sense of identity
- A whole life

Purposeful living

Community living was a way of life which gave purpose and direction through interdependent living with others, meaningful work and shared social and cultural experiences:

Interviewer*: What does that mean to you to be part of Botton community?*

Keiran*: It means to have a proper life*

Interviewer: *When you say a 'proper life' Keiran what do you mean by that? Can you explain that?*

Keiran: *Well having a job and having friends and having people to help you when your time gets hard and all that*

Community living for Keiran provides a '*proper life'*: a life with meaning, purpose, positive relationships and support in times of difficulty.

Confirmation of place

It gave confirmation of place, where residents felt 'wanted'. It was a secure base from which to launch out, to enjoy new experiences, knowing that there was a 'home' to return to:

Interviewer*: So what things are important about where you stay to make you have a sense of well-being and purpose and meaning in life?*

Arthur*: Well also when people tell you that you are definitely wanted*

Tony*: I like Botton because I like living and I like visiting. I like going to other Camphill places. Like I, earlier on this year I went down to the Mount. When I say the Mount, it's a Camphill like we have Botton…seeing different people, meeting different people it's very nice when we were down to see how they lived and then come home*

Sense of identity

Tony*: I mean we don't live in an instit.. what you'd call a home, in a children's home, you know this is life (***Vincent***:yes) This is a life I mean we work on the farm , we work in the food centre or she works in the dollshop making dollies or the weavery or whatever, but it's part of life. (***Vincent***:yeah) It's our life, it's our home em and if they [*those in authority*] want to criticise it let them. Let them come and see it.*

Tony amongst others voiced a powerful sense of identification with community living. For him Botton has the ingredients for a life rather than an existence – work and a place to call home - which he is willing to defend against criticism. Being part of living in community is a source of empowerment for Tony. This identity gained through being part of the community appeared to be a means by which some, like Tony, are more able to engage with those who do not have special needs. This enhances the meaning and purpose of their life and is a means by which they become more integrated in society rather than marginalised by it.

A 'whole' life

Tensions between community and individual needs were also expressed which, as we have seen in 'space for self', could impact on spiritual well-being. However, there remained an overwhelming sense that whatever the difficulties or disadvantages of community living, the participants had a largely positive attitude to their life, enjoying it and finding in it satisfaction and fulfilment –a whole life:

Connor: *As such I also enjoy being here. There's also plenty of work to be done and to be doing. Plenty of people to be, be able to socialising with. Just enjoy, just the whole life of Botton Village. And it's really great to be in. I think if I was anywhere else, I wouldn't enjoy it so much, it's…, yeah, I really enjoy it. It's really great. I think being with Keiran, meeting Bruce,*

Iris, Pauline and whoever I encounter. It's really just the whole em setup of Botton is really good

Conclusions

It was clear that the residents recognised spirituality as a significant dimension of their lives. The way in which they worked this out was complicated and rich. It can be seen from the brief reflection on formal spiritual practices that whilst important, they are clearly shifting and changing. In particular, the community church was highlighted as an area which did not seem to capture the spirituality or address the spiritual needs of residents. However, whilst formal spiritual practices are evolving, what we have described as informal spiritual practices, manifested through relationships, work and time for self, are present. Underpinning all there was the community structure –a secure, consistent context within which residents could explore their spirituality and seek out, experiment and develop spiritual practices, both formal and informal, which supported their spiritual well-being.

Our understandings of both the formal and informal spiritual practices will be enhanced by our dialogue with other communities, but at this stage it is worth bearing in mind that the changing spiritual landscape described in the introduction to this report is reflected in interesting ways amongst the Botton residents.

Part 3: Thematic Reflections on the Spirituality of Botton Co-workers and Employees[10]

Introduction

In our conversations with Botton co-workers and employees, we encountered a good deal of resonance with the types of views and perspectives that we have laid out thus far in Aberdeen and with the Botton residents. It was clear that the co-workers were much more conceptual in the ways in which they perceived spirituality and yet their descriptions of spirituality tended to be very experiential and grounded in their origins and outworkings. The basic sense of spirituality as something relating to meaning, purpose and hope that was apparent in the previous discussions was clearly the key feature, but the ways in which this was expressed were subtly different and raised different but no less important issues.

The significance of a spiritual framework

Most participants saw spirituality as the dimension which gave life meaning, purpose, deepening and an appreciation of life's value. It allowed individuals to 'make sense of life': *I haven't had any earth shaking experiences that makes me say 'oh yes, there's definitely something there'. It's more that nothing makes sense without it.*

Spirituality formed the lens through which life was viewed and through which life looked quite different than it would otherwise have done:

> *…actually interpreting my life as if the spiritual dimension is real gives it a much deeper meaning and makes it much easier to manage difficult situations. It gives me emotional depth that wouldn't be there otherwise and allows me to see value in everything. Whereas otherwise I might think*

[10] In this section of the report the word co-worker is used to denote both co-worker and employee, in order to preserve anonymity

that some things were definitely, you know, less worthy than other things. Whereas everything has its value, I think.

As with the residents, it was clear that this spiritual framework became particularly relevant during times of crisis such as loss, grief and death. At such times, the limits of personal power and control became all too obvious. When crisis hits there is a need to reach out beyond the self. Don expressed this well:

In a way I was sort of pushed into this position when my father died. He died when I was 12 and I'd prayed so hard and I'd believed so so much that he'd get better and then he didn't. So either all this God stuff was nonsense or it was for a reason and the reason just rang true.

For Don the death of a parent faced him with making a decision regarding his spiritual stance in life. The choice was to view life, including seemingly tragic events, as having meaning and purpose or to adopt a nihilistic position. Don chose the former.

For Chris, the spiritual quest related to the search for an effective framework in which he could make sense of life after death:

Interviewer*: What comes to mind when I say the word 'spirituality'?*
Chris*: Immediate reactions are issues connected with death, beyond our situation, in terms of 'off the top' without looking much more closely at the more subtle issues that we end up talking about. That searching for some you know forward framework I guess.*

Being able to make sense of life according to one's spiritual framework was perceived as most important for a person's sense of spiritual well-being:

*I would I would have chosen a different word for spiritual well being. I would have described it as coherence. You know it's where you you have a context. You understand that what you are doing, and where you are, the people you are with and everything has a kind of yeah coherence to it, you know it's, it's a kind of, I mean... It has, it holds in it maybe something of the quality of communion, coherence does because you've a sense of the oneness and you have somewhere that (***Madeline***: Harmony) in you*

Spiritual well-being occurs when your framework, your reference point allows you to make sense of life in a coherent way. It enables one to hold everything together and makes everything 'fit' not only in the present but also in the context of our past and future:

a sense of place, sense of where they've come from, a sense of identity, a sense of what challenges they may feel able to take on- being open to doing that too.

This spiritual frame was not always a positive one. Chris had encountered a frightening experience in his early life, which he associated in a negative way with spirituality. He preferred to concentrate on the practical aspects of life and to view things spiritual from a safe distance: *'I look at it with a sort of telescope'.* Despite this, he did not doubt the existence of a spiritual aspect to life. It was just something with which he did not, due primarily to fear, wish to become too personally involved:

Chris: *I'm a total unbeliever but an absolute believer having had an encounter as a youngster and being absolutely convinced that there was something most unusual and frightened myself to death if you like, but then from a rational position think this is, nothing stands up. These absolute opposite positions which I'm sure I can't reconcile*
Interviewer*: And that experience still influences your thinking?*

Chris: *Absolutely, yeah… Just in contact with something that you know was not tangible and real and to all, to all intents wasn't there but absolutely was there.*

Within the people from Botton with whom we spoke, Chris's perspective was atypical. Nonetheless, as we shall see when we come to explore the experience of people in Stourbridge, Chris's view does raise the important issue that spirituality need not necessarily be a force for good.

Spirituality

As with the other communities in this report, people tended to describe the ways in which spirituality functions rather than offer formal definitions of it. Spirituality was perceived by all as a fundamental and important element in life, the basis for individual and community living. Spirituality was taken as a 'given'; an underlying fact that is an immovable reality within people's lives. Some people made a conscious decision to recognise it and to work it out in their lives. However, spirituality remains a reality irrespective of people's responses to it. As Patrick put it: *'even if you not believed in any of it, it's still there… Spirituality is still there, the spirit is still there'.* Spirituality was viewed not as a psychological construct, but a reality which exists independent of particular beliefs or belief systems. It was seen as the basis of life; an indivisible force permeating all life: *'I always have to remember that behind the world, behind everything there's spirit'.* A person's spirituality is the unifying force that underpins and dynamises human existence: '*For me spirituality is kind of the thread which holds life together'.*

Spirituality and nature

We noticed previously that the Botton residents did not formally associate spirituality with nature. We reflected on some of the reasons for this. The co-workers on the other hand did highlight a connection with nature as significant for their understanding of spirituality. For some the creative power

displayed in the wonders of the natural world evidenced a spiritual dimension to life. Alastair sums this up quite well:

> *Yes, my beginning of that* [spirituality] *is nature. And nature of course around us is very strong, it's very diversified and because I've got an intricate interest in nature, into the tiniest thing, then of course that just sort, how shall I say, I mean all, that there must be somehow a creator behind all this.*

Alastair's primary connection with his conception of spirituality lies in his deep sense of connection with the natural world and its mysteries which awaken an awareness that there must be something - a creative power - behind the complexity of nature:

> *I personally find it very nourishing to be able to live with the season and to be able to have this access to well the fresh air and quality and foods. It's a very physical element but it does nourish us in other ways.*

This connection ties spirituality intimately into physicality and daily life, right down to the types of food we eat and indeed why we might have anything to eat in the first place:

> *Then again, you can broaden it to the field of nutrition. How is it that that feed us and sustains us and gives us the life forces so that we, yes, so that we can live healthily. That is again another of these miracles. What you could say is spirituality in the sustenance, in the food we take in? But of course it comes from the soil, it comes from the cosmos, all these, all the cosmic forces, they all have an influence on what grows and then we imbibe that and that – I don't know[laughs]*

Tied into this connection with, and dependence on, nature was a sense expressed by a number of participants that they were somehow closely

connected with the movements of the seasons and that this connection had spiritual significance. People indicated, for example, that they felt more inward and reflective in the winter and more outward and community orientated in the summer:

Patrick: *In the summer you kind of let go of spirituality because it's the holiday time you kind of mm[general laughter] it's all right… [More general laughter] You go more in this material part*
Josh: *I mean I would say that I find in a way spirituality more personal in the winter and in summer I find it very rich around me in the summertime.*
Madeline: *I wanted to say I have the feeling that spirituality is in its darker time more inward and in summer time you just living with nature*
Interviewer*: Right. So different expressions…*
Madeline: *So it's coming from outside and in winter it's coming from inside more*

There is certain resonance with the idea expressed within the Aberdeen community that spirituality had to do with the rhythm of the seasons. However, here a further facet emerged within the meta-rhythm, namely the personal experience that people expressed their spirituality in different ways and with varying qualities in rhythm with the seasons.

The origins of spirituality
The origins of this universal spiritual dimension experienced in nature and the seasons was expressed in various ways. For some it was understood within a religious framework:

If you believe in a god that creates individuals then the creator God creates spirituality within each of those individuals and if you follow anthroposophy… there's a certain spiritual element even in nature. Spirituality doesn't necessarily just, just appear or become manifest in a relationship between God and man… but em obviously if you believe in a

creator God then that's where you believe the strongest elements of spirituality lie - in that relationship, but if you don't believe that then… there is a lot of spirituality in individuals without having any connection with God… If you take the view of a spiritual God then you know everyone has a certain amount of spirituality in there.

For Joel spirituality is pervasive within creation, but is manifest in a particular way in human beings' relationships with God. This is not the only way that spirituality works itself out but, irrespective of its form, its origins lie in God.

Others were a bit less clear as to precisely where the originating force that brought spirituality into existence lay. For some people spirituality had to do with living life according to a set of spiritual laws that appeared to be determined by some mode of transcendent 'spirit'. Madeline described this as follows:

For me spirituality is… it's kind of the rules which are made by the eh…, how to say that,.. by the spirit, yeah, by things above us. To recognise these rules and to keep them in your head and to act according to them.

For Madeline spirituality has to do with coming to an awareness of the 'spiritual laws' and internalising them at an intellectual level. Once the rules are fully internalised intellectually, then strategies for translating them into particular forms of action can be worked through. This stands in an interesting contrast to the ways in which the residents expressed their spirituality wherein the actions seemed to precede any intellectual reflection on them or their source. Madeline's intellectual perspective on spirituality sits in an interesting tension with Emily's description of spirituality which is clearly experiential: '*the way to be moved by music is really extraordinary and again so that to me that's like just the spirit sort of speaking you know right to your soul'*

The point here is not that spirituality is either intellectual *or* experiential. It is clearly both. Different people process 'the spiritual' in different ways according to their character, personality and mind-set. This raises the types of issues that the residents highlighted within the context of worship. Modes of worship and communal spiritual expression that suit one person may not suit others, not because one is right or better than the other, but because spirituality and spiritual expression is much more individualised than we might often assume.

Individual and changing over time

There was the idea that individual concepts and expressions of spirituality can change and develop over time and that personal experiences can influence the avenues through which spirituality is expressed and supported:

Alison: *I don't know, em… Possibly it changes over the years what one might say. What gives importance now to my life I think could be different to what it might have been 10 years ago…So right now currently I don't know, it's a very funny thing to say but kindness. Right now in these next months and looking back on the last few and looking a little bit ahead to the future that gives me value.*

Interviewer*: Receiving kindness or giving or…*

Alison: *Both and I suppose I have to put it in the context of Botton village in the community where I'm living and what we're going through at the moment and the particular struggles and it's yeah just more and more this experience of, if I or another can just have a certain warmth to each other that can give so much in value and purpose and meaning.*

In the same way as our priorities in life change with time, so also does our spirituality and spiritual needs. Some expressed this in terms that indicated that spirituality involved an on-going journey that was facilitated in a number of ways. Ellen describes it in this way:

It's always moving, it's always alive, it's always got more to it and there's always the next few doors. You open one door and there's always the next few doors, and you choose one of those doors and there's still the next few doors and so it goes on and it's that, that I find is very inspiring in our spiritual life.

People seemed to be engaged in travelling along some sort of 'spiritual path':

I think spiritual experience, spiritual search and all these things I think that simply cannot be satisfied by I don't know buying some clothes or eating some food.

The search for a spiritual path was both triggered, intensified and reaffirmed by experiences of nature, God and other life events, arousing a need to find a framework in which to explain the deep inner conviction that behind such things there must be 'something more'.

This being so, the meeting of spiritual needs is necessarily contextual and requires close attention to both the universal and the particular. At this moment in time, Alison conceives of her spirituality in relatively simple terms as the kindness and warmth shown between human beings. At other times, she may have the need for broader understandings. The key point here is that in order to understand what spirituality means in the lives of individuals and communities, it is necessary to recognise the changing dimension of spiritual needs and the creative tension between universal human needs (meaning, purpose, hope, love, God) and the personal needs of the individual in the present moment (as already highlighted in the resident responses to bereavement).

Seen and unseen

In like manner to the residents, co-workers felt that spirituality was something unseen but nonetheless significant for day-to-day living:

In terms of awareness that there are things in the universe, in life, beyond what you can see or measure, things that do actually count, things that make a difference.

It is based on faith:

I would say that it would be things that are not provable first of all. That people often have beliefs, beliefs in you know, you could call it faith or beliefs and I would say that's spirituality

It is intangible, inexpressible and 'greater than ourselves':

It's that something beyond, that something you can't pin down, that sense of yeah, something bigger, greater than just what we see and touch here.

It is that aspect of the person that lives on beyond life as we know it now:

I think spirituality is that that lives on in me and in other people. You know what is beyond, beyond my physical existence. You know maybe the energy from where we come from or what… consider as spirituality

Beyond all, spirituality is that which gives life:

…it gives life in us and what we're doing. This is spirituality actually. It's life

It was interesting to note the way in which people moved backwards and forwards between the idea of spirit as an external divine force, spirit as an internal human attribute and spirituality as the outworking of either or both. This lack of conceptual clarity was in line with the issues we highlighted in the previous section and indicates once again that perhaps the important issue is not what spirituality *is,* so much as what it means and how it works itself out within individuals.

External and internal

Henry*: I always have to remember that behind the world, behind everything, there's spirit. I have to remember that and, and I, within*

myself I can also experience there's spirit and what does it mean to me today is the hard part is to bring those two together or to remember when I'm dealing with another person there's spirit there. I do it in certain moments but not all the time! It's a great shame, I'm ashamed of myself or when I worked on the farm or when I deal with a table that there's spirit behind all that. And I'll forget it in the moment or that's easy to do. So what does it mean to me today is the struggle that it enters into daily life somehow as much as I can do it all the time [Laughter] I think- very small!

Intangible and yet tangible

As well as being mysterious and 'unseeable', spirituality was also perceived as manifesting itself in the world in quite concrete ways, particularly through relationships:

We all said something about the spirit being something beyond, kind of echoed that anyway, in our different ways but I think it's also something that connects us all. So relationships - which can't help but be about the spirit as well

As we saw with the residents, relationships appeared to be a concrete way in which the mysterious force participants named 'the spiritual' found a grounding and an outworking in the lives of individuals and the community:

Nigel*: I have to think of Botton again because that's where I'm living and I can see that certain things actually are as they are because of the spirituality that somehow is alive in the people and and in general is, is there. But we are not always aware of it but I do feel it has actually created the community what it is now em so we are inspired by this spiritual reality, partly conscious and partly unconscious.*

Spirituality thus had internal and external dimensions, which were clearly intangible, as well as other aspects which people considered quite tangible.

Spirituality-in-relationships

It will be helpful to develop further our understanding of spirituality-in-relationships which, as we have seen, was present in the other groups of people we listened to earlier in this report. For the Botton co-workers, relationships were viewed as the means by which people develop spiritually. People described interactions with others as *'spiritual transactions'*:

> *When I'm talking with you, you receive something from me, don't you? … Em… is also this spirit you know that's going to you and you know you give. It's something, it's not only em teaching not only you know em domestic jobs or what you learn, what you teach it's also more, its love, it's compassion, it's something that em it really has come from from…*

The spiritual dynamic here is interesting. Teaching, work, caring are not simply tasks that are done for their own sake. They are places of spiritual transaction wherein something spiritual is *actually* passed from one to the other. It was not clear precisely how people understood the ontology of the transaction, whether it was energy, parts of God or something different that was passed between people. But the implication was always that the presence of spiritual transactions meant that mundane things such as relationships, work, teaching and so forth were imbued with spiritual meaning which became a primary motivation for engaging in such relational and physical tasks.

In line with this, there was an appreciation of a spiritual element in everyone which was a source of connection between individuals. For some their relationship with the Botton residents had been important in the development of their understanding of the role of spirituality-in-relationships. As Patrick told us:

> *But this, this kind of upholding is two way. You know we have the beauty here, you know, adults with special needs, I learned far more from the*

*people I'm working with than they probably learned from me. You know tolerance, you know understanding, forgiveness you know. They have it, they seem to have it in abundance and teach me much more than I can perhaps teach them. So it's two way (***Interviewer***: Sort of mutuality?) It's two way. It's not all from us to them they you know there's lots about their character that we need too.*

For Patrick, his relationships with the people with special needs in Botton has been an important source of revelation. As he related with them so he was transformed and his understandings of 'the spiritual life' were both challenged and changed as he allowed himself to be 'taught' rather than trying to 'teach'.

For some people human relationships were a major motivating force in their life:

Chris: *It's interesting to weigh up how much you need others to make that work as well [General agreement] - to the extent that you need others to recognise the things that you might be doing well or other wise, how that feeds into how, the way you would self evaluate, if you like….when all's said and done it mostly it matters how you live your life, how it is and the way you work with others and the way they interact*
Interviewer*: Matters..?*
Chris: *Well in the sense of, when in the end, when the, all the jargon is set aside, you know the human relationships probably are the things that will count in the end. In terms of the way we feel about ourselves and develop*

Human relationships were also core to people's outworking of their concepts of spirituality. They provide a space wherein spirituality is experienced without the need to define it:

I'm much more of a practical person and if I really think about values and meaning – for me is also more, like Anita says, it's the meeting of people and it's em it's especially the, obviously the people we live with… the special needs people … and just to really have this extended family, and just to see where everybody finds their place and to just be there for others as well not only for the children. I kind of like that and em but I also find it very interesting but at the same time most challenging is em also having always the new young co-workers and what I like a lot is actually to see that we plant seeds and because the people they leave again and they always take something along and I do like that a lot,em yeah

At the core of the spiritual transaction that forms the heart of the co-workers' practical spirituality is the practice of love:

Lisa: *Yeah, I mean, I'm being very honest here, sometimes the situation is, you know, particularly with young co-workers and people I find, oh they can be exasperating and all the rest of it and I think, 'Hang on now. If you really loved that person how would you deal with this situation?' And when I can get to that place and deal with it in that way, then it's good. You do find a way through and you know, I often find that there's a kind of response from them whereas they might have been a very negative response previously. But as you say, I'm not always good at doing that. But there is something about this love, you know, Christian or what?*
Joel: *I suppose it's the concept of love really. It's so common. It's one of those things that's common to every human being, you know this concept of love. That you can't prove em but everybody believes in love and in the same way, I mean em, most people also believe in evil as well, you know. So you have this, you know, if you, if you feel you're doing things out of love then from the moral perspective em as long as you have a bit of knowledge to go with it, then you can be sure that you're going in the right direction according to em most peoples' beliefs you know from a moral perspective. And if you relate from people out of, out of these, you know,*

out of this concept of love which is not just merely an emotion but you know a conviction, if you like, something that you feel from your very inside, from your stomach almost, then I think that's, you know, common to everybody, I think that's most important probably

Loving relationships within which deep spiritual transactions can occur seems to sit at the core of people's intuitive understandings of what spirituality is in practice if not in definition:

Josh*: you're building an individual relationship with every member of the house community...it can take quite some time so you have to build up this individual relationship that he feels cared for and out of that care something can grow. That is actually a morality that grows in the individual relationship. It's not a moral code as such.*

Belief and Faith

Whilst relationships formed a primary conduit for the understanding and practice of spirituality, there was a general expression that belief and faith more formally conceptualised related closely to people's spirituality:

In my time before Camphill, I can look back and think like in a way I was quite empty, quite shallow. But with, with a belief- whether it's a Muslim belief or a Christianity belief or whatever- you have to have that and hopefully most people realise that at some time or other. I think even atheists I'm sure at some time in their life, maybe a loved one's hurt or injured, they probably pray. They probably won't admit it but I'm sure that someone asks for mercy or asks for forgiveness from somewhere in their quiet moments.

Holding formal sets of beliefs was felt to be comforting and empowering:

It is comforting to believe in something but more than comforting it's empowering. If I believe in something, I believe I can make a difference. I believe that what happens can make a difference and has a meaning and that's empowering compared to thinking well it's all random, nothing you do makes any difference and you might as well give up now.

There seemed to be a need to believe that '*what I do matters, therefore I matter'*, a general sentiment that reflects the type of ongoing search for personal meaning and purpose in life that has been highlighted thus far. Beliefs and faith systems seemed to provide a structure or framework for this self-affirmation:

Faith is very important because in a way that's in a way giving, giving your thinking something to live into. You know you hold certain thoughts, you hold them in, in you know, a certain right way and, and it enables the social life to move.

Having said that, not all participants saw a clear separation between formal faith based religion and the more free-floating spirituality that we have highlighted in this report:

Interviewer*: What part does religion play in spirituality for you?*
Madeline*: Well I think that when we are convinced of the spirit and try to live according to what we are convinced of then the spirit will bring flow into what we are doing.*
Interviewer*: So by that do you mean that religious practices are unnecessary or...*
Madeline*: I think that's different for people. For some people it's very necessary, for others not and well I would call that religious as well*
Patrick*: Now we manifest differently too. I mean some of us have the need, really need that very inner room if I, to sit to pray and reflect, others need to go to the church. So I call them both religious*

Henry: *If one takes Christianity or Christ as it's described you know He doesn't say 'I want you to go to church' or he says well 'you're going to have to walk the path I walked'- doesn't sound that great does it? But 'what profit if you gain the earth if you lose your soul' and 'where two or three are gathered then I'm there'. So in a way it is religious in the sense that you go to church or in some, or there are no rules for where two or three are gathered (***Madeline***: but He says 'are gathered in my name') Yeah 'in my name' but there's no ritual for that, it's individual or Rudolf Steiner says the new communion will be two people meeting. It it won't be in the church in the future, sometime in the future. So that's a very religious experience that but it's not as defined. So in a way that, that spirituality has to be religious in the end. I guess it's a new religion, it's how you create new religions*

Others felt that individual religions contained different truths, but taken together they really pointed toward a single mysterious truth:

Don: *Well I think, I think every religion has some truth in it (***Chris***:mmm) and every religion can lead a follower who, who, who does so humbly on to better things, and to deeper insights and lead them closer to god, or whatever you want to call 'it' but you know, and for, by the same token, you know, any given religion can also be abused and go nowhere near god - including Christianity*

There was not the same emphasis on traditional Christian religion that we had encountered in our conversations with the Botton residents. Lisa was one of the few people who located herself within a specifically Christian spiritual framework:

I was brought up, well my father was, we always joked and called him a raving Marxist, [some laughter] who basically taught us there was nothing in anything …and then I kind of had a real spiritual experience, I suppose

and found myself basically saying 'Look I just believe in God. I believe in Jesus- that there is something really...' A bit like you said that there is something more than you can explain and that really has sort of set the course for my life really… Yeah I mean I go to church, certainly not religiously [laughs] but I do go to church… in good old-fashioned prayer. That, that's where I probably find immediate spiritual contact or whatever.

Lisa had a distinct conversion experience which was a significant turning point in her life. It is her specifically Christian faith that nurtures her spirituality and provides her spiritual framework. There was, however, amongst others a significant interest in anthroposophy.

Anthroposophy

The majority of the co-workers that we spoke with found their spiritual framework within Anthroposophy:

Anthroposophy is spiritual science. It is a form of spiritual life and certainly not the only one but it's the people who chose to, well, come here and then stay here I guess it's, it somehow made sense to people who stay on.

Anthroposophy helps people frame the world and their experiences in it in quite particular ways:

Interviewer*: What is it for you that you feel gives your life meaning and purpose and value?*
Ronald*: Naturally anthroposophy of course. It tells me who I am and who I was and who I will be through all of world evolution. And it tells me that I don't just have a life on earth but that I have a life before birth and a life after birth and that I'm in a whole community, a world of human beings who are all evolving and we cannot evolve alone and we evolve together with other people.*

Anthroposophy provided Ronald with a philosophy of life which offered him at least four essential points of spiritual rootedness. Anthroposophy:

- answered existential questions around life death and life after death
- gave a sense of identity and continuity through time
- gave a sense of place in this world
- gave sense of relatedness to others, to the world and the continuing process of evolution.

There was a sense in which anthroposophy seemed to have taken on a role remarkably similar to religion.

In line with our previous reflections on the function of spirituality, anthroposophy was perceived as a framework within which to pursue an inner path, make sense of life's mysteries and as a means of understanding deep inner experiences:

Patrick*: Following Steiner's, you know, Anthroposophy that I'm, it's given me a lot of strength in times of difficulty. That through anthroposophy it's, it's given many answers to perhaps inner questions I had within myself which, you know, where else could those questions be asked or answered other than within yourself but never had the tool to get to those answers. And like I say that gives you strength*
Nigel*: Out of anthroposophy one is able to look at life in a different way. One can maybe lead life differently. It doesn't mean to say you don't, you still have to meet up meet difficult situations and they can, like anywhere else, they can become very tricky but I always feel we have this possibility to, well, to try to make a change or to address it in a different way with the help of anthroposophy.*

Anthroposophy provided people with a means to gain a different perspective on life and provided tools and support to change.

Many of the ideas, beliefs and concepts expressed around spirituality appeared to be intentionally grounded in anthroposophy, i.e. people seem to have imbued something of the ethos of anthroposophy without necessarily having any formal training or teaching in it:

I think as co-workers here we all have a relationship to anthroposophy. I don't think you could be a long-term co-worker here without any relationship to anthroposophy. I think that's part of the decision to come here and that can be varying in varying degree but I think one needs to have a connection. One needs to actually be on the path of that, anthroposophy.

Penny's view was quite strong in relation to the centrality of anthroposophy for the practice of living in the Botton community. Others viewed it rather more broadly as Ellen's view illustrates:

I suppose I would differ. I mean I would broaden it really to the fact that there is like inner work or you take on there is em. Well I don't know, the spiritual realities, here we talk about them as sort of matter of fact almost. We, we ,we are trying to work that and kind of understand what that is and that will come in all different degrees.

This 'spiritual striving' Ellen sees is not fully tied into anthroposophy but is to be found beyond the boundaries of a single philosophy:

None of us have signed on the dotted line 'I believe in reincarnation'. That's not it, but there is something to working with what lies behind what is seen.

Thus, Ellen perceived that individuals would need to be willing to engage in some sort of inner path of development based on working with spiritual issues but not necessarily based in anthroposophy.

This more liberal view stood in interesting contrast to the fact that all of the long-term co-workers who participated in our study had, to a greater or lesser extent, adopted anthroposophy as their guiding philosophy in life. This is not dissimilar to the tension between the long-term co-workers in the Aberdeen community and those who have arrived more recently. Nevertheless, whilst there were indications of diversity and change, one sensed that it would be hard to live in a community like Botton for any length of time and not 'absorb' some of the philosophy of anthroposophy:

> **Emily***: And when you come to Botton no one does say 'Right you're in Botton now you've been here 2 years, now you've got to sign this contract[laughter] spend x hours a week', I mean it just doesn't happen. It's all around you and at some point one just decides to pick it up.*

However, important as anthroposophy was it was clear that, whilst it had been a motivating force for some co-workers to come to Camphill, a number of participants had no prior connection to anthroposophy. For some their primary motivation had been the work and community life rather than the particular philosophy on which the community was based. Nevertheless, life within the community and exposure to anthroposophy meant that overtly or covertly, anthroposophy had become a significant dimension of the thinking and spiritual practices of many of the co-workers with whom we spoke.

Developing an anthroposophical worldview

The process whereby people find themselves acquiring the language of anthroposophy is interesting and has some tantalising parallels with religious conversion. A number of the participants recounted what could be viewed as 'conversion experiences' and in most cases the transition into anthroposophy was gradual and occurred in tandem with their deeper involvement with, and absorption into, the community.

The practical/pragmatic 'conversion'

For some their 'conversion' to anthroposophy had been led by the need to find an appropriate and practical tool to better understand themselves, those they were working with and the wider world. It was based on gaining answers to questions that had a practical application in day-to-day life:

Alastair: *I don't want to study anthroposophy, I want to work with it. And that means in my physical work you see in the workshop and then sort of over the years of course I realised that through gaining a bit of insight into all this material that is available to us, I got to know first and foremost myself and that was a bit of a revelation at various stages in life and then through that knowledge I sort of feel I'm ,it then makes it easier for me, as I've started off with, to live in community and to understand all my fellow friends, my friends in the community, their yeah their actions or their being. I can, it gives me a tool to understand the people around me better*

The primary motivating factor for Alastair was the practical outworking of spiritual principles in everyday life. Anthroposophy led him to an understanding of himself and from that to a greater understanding of others, which ultimately led to greater ability to live in community.

There was the general idea that community living needs self-awareness along with understanding of others and that a common conceptual framework is helpful. For many in Camphill anthroposophy provided that framework:

Nigel*: I can't see what is behind the physical world but I know there's an incredible amount behind the physical world and the plant life that I can see from here I know that it's there with the indications of Rudolf Steiner. And I don't always see it but I can fall back to that knowledge at times and that can really well it certainly makes life a lot richer and also between the meeting of people the meeting between people is something that obviously it's very important but also anthroposophy actually talks about this many*

or even gives very clear guidelines that are very interesting and actually also that one could apply on day to day life

Like Alastair, Nigel seeks the application of anthroposophical theory in daily life. Anthroposophy has impact on daily life as a concept to explain what he himself cannot experience. He appears to rely on Steiner's indications regarding what lies behind the physical rather than personal experience i.e. he believes. As such, he finds security in the guidelines laid out in anthroposophy, which seems to help him in practical areas such a relationships.

Intellectual 'conversion'

Some seemed to have come to anthroposophy through a sifting of various other philosophies and religions and finding that anthroposophy made the best sense to them.

Joel: *As an individual I attempt to take in as much information about the world and about the religions of the world …what I feel I attempt to do is find the most, find out what is the most feasible about all these questions about, you know, what people say is the truth. So it's a sort of search for the truth but a balanced picture of the truth that takes, that takes in all considerations…These are all possibilities but then I've got to make a decision about what is the most feasible truth, what is in truth, what is the most feasible thing about about what I know about the world, what I've been taught, what other people say about their own experiences. So I'm looking at as an individual what's the most feasible there. And it it depends a bit as well on my own experiences and exercising what I through my own life style for instance eh as to what rings true through my own experiences, you know, acting out what you feel is truth, you know, in terms of spirituality, the things that you can't prove.*

Joel expresses appreciation of different approaches to spirituality through different religions and has searched to find for himself the most plausible answers to existential questions through looking at this knowledge and also at his own experiences. For Joel spirituality involves, at some point, making a decision about the most feasible truth for him. It was, however, clear that this was not an entirely 'intellectual exercise' but did involved some element of 'experience'.

The experiential 'conversion'

Some had adopted anthroposophy because it seemed to resonate with their own inner 'knowing' and experiences. This did not necessarily mean that they embraced all aspects of it equally. Some admitted that much of it remained too intellectual for them to fully identify with:

Anita*: I do recognise anthroposophy as something also important in my life but at the same time, it's for many of the things they are standing for me somewhere on the theoretical basis. ...All the ideals of Rudolf Steiner they are very lofty actually, you know, and somehow very difficult to prove or not prove you know and you can actually only work with them to find some sort of relationship to it. ...And on one side it's a background or it's a thing to work on and on the other side it's also the pain of not quite following, you know, of not quite, well for instance, understanding many aspects of it.*

Interviewer*: Can you identify some of the things in anthroposophy that do have a strong resonance with you Anita?*

Anita*: Reincarnation…*

Reincarnation and Karma

Anita's experience was quite typical at least in the way that she identified closely with the idea of reincarnation. The two concepts drawn from anthroposophy that seemed to have particular resonance were reincarnation

and karma. These two concepts were seen as enriching life by offering explanation of life and death events. Interestingly, for some, reincarnation seemed to fit with their ideas that there was an inherent fairness to the universe:

Reincarnation and something, something that I've been aware of somewhere. You know I grew up Catholic...here's no talk about life after death other than, other than the spiritual life and when I was probably about 14 I just decided that it just can't be true … there's just no logic in it. Because you know if they say God is fair, it isn't fair what I see you know? [Laughs] It isn't fair what I see and there can only be fairness if you think of a, you know, reincarnation and then I met the task of my life even before I met anthroposophy properly...And then being in Camphill I was very glad you know that I could actually talk a little about it.

Reincarnation also seemed to offer some an explanation for things that happen in this life and gave a certain amount of strength and encouragement when life got hard:

Yeah whereas if something really traumatic come into my life I think maybe it's something I haven't sorted out from my last life. It's something you need to work and I think it's eh yeah I suppose it gives you courage somehow

It also offered comfort at times of death and a sense of connection to that which was greater than the individual:

The knowledge of a spiritual world where you know those souls who died have departed to also makes em makes it em a lot easier to see people leave this world that, that's interesting, that OK, traditionally see that the passing of a person is, is seen as something bad and it's death but actually it's a birth in another world. So this birth, this birth yeah this birth into,

into the other world is just, I think, that's become quite a reality through this sort of knowledge of reincarnation and karma. It has certainly enriched life and don't always answer everything but one feels that certain things one can explain better for oneself…

For some the knowledge that death was not the end had a deep significance for their present life in terms of its meaning and purpose:

Ronald*: I realised that not only do we exist after death but there was also reincarnation. Well then I realised, well I live eternally and so that just that was enough to give my life meaning.*
Terry: *Well I don't want to repeat what Ronald said but I think it's the fact that I'm secure, you know like when my physical body will die and go that I'm not dead. I think for me it give me some kind of comfort somehow. Give me nice warm feeling. I think that's important for me.*

The sense of security coming from a sense of continuity of self seemed significant. This appeared to enhance a sense of place in the universe; that somehow we matter, that life has meaning and purpose and is not a futile random event but is in some way 'ordained':

As for me, in reincarnation I'm also interested in the stars and in connecting peoples from life to life according to according to where the planets are and fixed stars.

Reincarnation was also used to explain difficulties in human relationships and as a potential means of understanding conflict:

It can come that you meet a totally new person and you have this strong sympathy or antipathy feelings and you don't know really where they come from and em you know in those moments it usually flashes in, you know, to mind maybe I've had something with this person before

Whether it led to more effective resolution of conflict was not clear. It could of course be viewed as having inherent dangers - if the karmic timescale was applied in life and therefore there was no need to resolve conflict in the present or as justification for that which an individual wishes to do:

Interviewer*: And does that have an effect on the way you live you life in this life? That that kind of philosophy, that background?* [reincarnation]
Terry*: Yes it does because I suppose I think supposing spiritually in my life differently. I guess it's like suppose you smoke. Well it's not the end of the world or it's maybe for a purpose or you know just kind of yeah.*

For one member of the community reincarnation was a rather frightening topic to consider although she could see and had experienced its relevance at times of bereavement:

Kirsten*: I think it's something I struggle with in that, that I don't really dare to think about it properly yet. I find the whole, this whole threshold topic yeah this whole threshold em how would you say yeah I find it very difficult to think about and I suppose it's just because I'm so much in life right now being a mother with young children and I, I, it actually scares me to think about it.*

Thus ideas around spirituality, such as reincarnation, which for some brought comfort and security were for others a source of discomfort and engendered insecurity rather than peacefulness.

It was recognised that the influence of the idea of reincarnation on daily life and actions fluctuated, perhaps healthily so as people recognised that an over emphasis of this concept could at times be detrimental to functioning fully in this life:

But equally, it is not always so apparent to, to think of reincarnation because it can be also wearing. You know all you do, you read things for your next life. It's not a comfortable thought to live with really you know, it's, it's, and yet em I, I somehow I think yeah it's a background, it's everywhere I go. At moments it's very present and at other times it's probably totally forgotten you know

The idea of 'karma' was also highlighted as offering a distinct framework for viewing and interpreting life experiences and understanding interpersonal circumstances and relationships:

Nigel*: Karma and karmic connections that and that one somehow, by I suppose understanding that a little bit because I can't say I understand it all but yeah I see it as a sort of yeah certainly leading lights in my life and, and through that I maybe able to understand my personal connections to people now in this life.*
Don*: I mean, I see everything as a karmic opportunity. You are constantly being offered opportunities to learn or to, I suppose when we're talking about karma, to adjust the balance but em every situation has something to teach you, every situation has some good that you can bring through it, or may come to you through it em even the most negative ones. So all, all experience is, is potentially positive*.
Lisa*: I think I believe that but I'm not very good at living it!*

So here we have a concept that potentially can help people to live life fully. Yet, it all seems to come down to working through precisely how one might translate the idea into practice. Lisa is honest enough to admit that for her that is not so easy.

Spirituality as striving

The idea that spirituality and the 'spiritual path' involved a degree of striving and sacrifice was a prominent theme for some of the participants. This emerged in a number of areas and created for some an on-going 'tension'. For some spirituality was seen as having to do with the tension created between holding an inner concept and its practical outworking in everyday life in a consistent way:

> **Josh***: Spirituality is is something that is between a struggle towards finding context for what's happening and that's really finding spirit in everything and in every person. And that's a struggle because there are lots of hindrances to make you forget like Henry just said. And on the other hand there's this struggle for practice, to bring it into a rhythm*

There seemed to be a challenge in bridging the gap between a personal inner experience of spirit and the recognition of that same spirit within others and the outer world. And further, to translate that concept into some sort of reality in the daily encounters with others.

This sense of striving to make manifest the spiritual in everyday life appeared to create a sort of on-going 'stress', which was not always health giving. This emerged strongly in a discussion regarding the setting of 'an example' for the residents, which was referred to as 'being upright' i.e. maintaining certain standards of dignity and practice deemed necessary for the functioning of the community. This striving for 'uprightness' had, for at least one co-worker, resulted in negative health effects

> **Henry***: One's creating this uprightness or trying to however one put's it, one's trying it so that also the residents can grow. It's not so that they become us that's not really the aim in the end or, or the aim is they grow and sometimes they need challenging, like I need challenging*

Patrick: W*hen you go away the first week when you're on holiday you just, well I am just blah [laughter] because suddenly you don't have to have this real uprightness you know because if you want a common rhythm or structure in the house or in the work realm you have to lead by example. And this being so upright nearly all the time is, you know, can be very wearing. Especially if it's not part of your normal make up you know. I think in the early years of coming into Camphill and having to be upright so often was you know very hard. I think it made me ill in the end.*

Here we have the interesting idea that a focus on spirituality may not always lead to spiritual well-being!

Self-acceptance

Others however tempered this somewhat sacrificial approach and identified spirituality more with self-acceptance and self-knowledge.

Nigel*: I'm hoping I can find the spiritual well-being in other areas*..[other than church attendance] I*t needs the right balance whatever you do and from a spiritual perspective I think there would be different elements to it- acceptance of oneself or being able to feel nourished at a spiritual level, to be able to access that nourishment and to feel that one's, therefore any particular needs that one would have- spiritual needs- that they are met, so that could be possibly with the help of reading or particular exercises or which I try to do*

Don*: For me I would say it*[spiritual well-being] *would be related to my ability to look at myself honestly and see myself with all my warts and bad bits and both wonder what I can do, you know, recognising the faults, make some attempt to change but within all that still actually love myself enough, to to value myself and want to you know and see, see the the value in pushing forward*

Interviewer*: So self-acceptance is part of spiritual well-being?*

Don*: There's a self-awareness and self-acceptance*

Interviewer*: Both of that?*

Don*: Yes because without that the relating to other people which I think it is also, and is crucial can't really happen, if you don't know yourself. I'm not sure how well you can ... I suppose to an extent you can see yourself reflected in other people but then it comes back to what you see of yourself. Our spiritual responsibility at least initially, is to ourselves.*

Nigel and Don considered self-awareness and self-acceptance necessary prerequisites for spiritual well-being, enabling healthy relationships and providing the basic motivation for contributing to life and for continuing on an individual spiritual path.

Community living: an aspect of spirituality

For all those living in community, it appeared to be an important aspect of their spirituality and a means by which they perceived it was expressed. Community living could in this sense also be regarded as a spiritual practice in itself. This was not so for those working but not living in the community, who saw community living as one way to live and not the only one:

*The thing to remember is there's not one way of cracking the nut is there, or skinning the cat, or whatever, there are lots of ways, lots of different approaches, lots of different ways of living and doing things and this is not right necessarily. (***Interviewer***: It is a way then?)I think you have to be realistic. It's a view, it's one vision or one of you know, there are many visions around the same problem area here and you know it's very risky to say 'this is the way to do it' (***Joel***:yeah, that's right) and it's certainly not the only way*

Providing meaning and purpose

Community living was the vehicle through which some co-workers had come to find meaning and purpose in their lives:

Henry: *Yeah it certainly gave me meaning in life. That was the reason I came because I couldn't see how to live and and it gave me meaning.*
Emily: *I suppose again it has to be one of many things but I'd say one is having a role which you, I, you, one personally values and sees the purpose in it and is valued, feeling valued and valuing yourself, the role and I really value the role I have here and I've experienced having a role which I actually don't value at all. So that's pretty important*

Like Henry, community living gave Emily a valued role in life, an aspect which had not been fulfilled by any of her previous jobs and surrounded her with others with whom she could share a common aim. These she identifies as important aspects of her finding meaning and purpose in her life

Sharing common ideals
Community living provides an opportunity to strive along with other like-minded people towards common goals and ideals, and also to have the freedom to express ideas on spirituality:

Emily: *There is this mostly unspoken understanding that somehow we're all striving towards something fairly similar and that's also very important. Just just knowing that whereas if you live outside it's a bit more pot luck if you actually meet the person or people who you can share these sort of deeper searchings with. Whilst here there's you know a lot of scope for that*

It seemed important to all that this unifying ethos had a spiritual basis rather than only a materialistic basis:

Penny: *Well this house is a big part* [of that which gives her life meaning and purpose] *and yes being in, working with people who are, have a spiritual endeavour so that what we do every day is not purely out of materialistic reasons of just keeping ourselves alive and etcetera that we have a spiritual dimension to it. I would say that the religious aspect too*

but I, I share my life with people who appreciate, say grace and before meals and, and celebrating festivals

Community living where the shared work is seen as a 'spiritual endeavour' was viewed by the majority of participants as a significant dimension of their spirituality and a contributing factor to their spiritual well-being.

Supporting individual spiritual development and spiritual practices

It was also perceived that community living enabled spiritual development and offered opportunities and support for individual spiritual practices. There was an awareness that different people expressed their spirituality in different ways and were supported by different spiritual practices.

Conventional religious practices were important to some of the participants but were not articulated as important by the majority. Church attendance, prayer, bible study, meditation and anthroposophic 'exercises' were all mentioned but participation seemed rather variable. Some identified that these were not practices in which they themselves engaged but did not pinpoint what they did. There was, however, a consensus that some form of inner nourishment was necessary to maintain a sense of spiritual well-being, although the form which this might take and the vehicles for it were seen to vary from individual to individual:

Emily*: This feeling of being fed. You know, when you've been to a study group or you've been to the service are two examples- you do feel quite different when you come out than the beginning and I think that is just a sense of spiritual well-being.*

There was the perception expressed by some that in principle and practice the rhythmical life in Botton encouraged pursuit of spiritual practices yet paradoxically the need to carve out time for these was also expressed:

Alison: *I really feel when we talk in big pictures we would want to be encouraging that in ourselves and each other. To encourage finding those moments of consciousness*

Interviewer*: Is it something you need to actively work at or are, what I'm trying to get are these, are there opportunities consciously provided within Botton for these moments or do you have to seek them out yourself all the time?*

Alison*: There's quite, there's consciously set up the opportunities, moments, some even rhythmically again and again and again*

Penny: *Well for me there would be also part of that the sort of carving out a moment in the morning and the evening and lunch time of, to just concentrate on a verse or trying to meditate, I say the word trying[slight laugh] you know but really carving out that moment and I feel you know if that that does feed me actually this rhythm of everyday*

Search for space for self

For some this 'carving out' of space for self appeared in practice to be a contentious issue and one which they struggled to resolve. It brought to light a conflict/tension between individual needs and the community.

Anita: *I think me as an individual in something different than, than the community although me as an individual is part of the community and part, part of me is community but there's, there's something which I describe as in my personal free space you know. And sometimes when community pressures become too big which which I'm sure we have all experienced that too em I, I need to find that space you know and and actually don't want to know anybody in those moments… but I want that space yeah which is my personal free egoistical space [Laughs] you know because I think there's always tension between an individual and community you know and it's inherent in the…*

Interviewer: *So the space for self is important. Is is it, is there, is that sort of scheduled in if you like to you life here or is it something you need to just make the effort to seek out for yourself?*
Anita: *Steal it!*

Anita's search for 'free time' echoes that already expressed by the residents and highlights that community living can at times run counter to spiritual well-being. Anita's assertion that she needs to '*steal it*' while in a sense flippant, points to an underlying frustration that she perceives this 'space for self' is not given freely within community life. This fits with the observation that: '*Life has to be pretty bad before before it's recognised that the person has to, actually has to have a bit of space'.*

This may point to a negative aspect of the ethos of spiritual striving (already touched upon) – which implies doing rather than being.

Anita: *I sometimes wonder whether my fellow human beings understand you know that I now in this moment need the space. So if they see me sitting outside in the middle of the day although it's maybe my only half hour I have what what would they all say to each other about me… sometimes I think 'Why are we so terribly hard on each other?'*

It appeared that community perceptions regarding the practices which supported spiritual well-being were at times at odds with individuals' perceptions of what was necessary for their own spiritual well-being. In the past spiritual well-being may have been focussed on and found within community living and practices:

I mean you have the festivals, services, the social possibilities and the work. I mean the whole of you is used up,… Yes, it's a whole and wholesome life I think for anybody.

But for today's co-workers this seems no longer to be the case, with recognition that it may not always be health-giving for the needs of the individual to be subsumed for the good of the community. Some seemed to be seeking to balance to the community aspect with a more individualised expression:

> **Anita:** *I think that you know the needs of the communities are always greater than you actually, and the awareness of what could be needed in, in yourself is always greater than what you actually can give. I think it needs a fair bit of integrity to actually say (***Ronald***: mhmm) 'I do this or I need this because if I don't I may not function any more'- because it is a selfish thing somewhere.*

This move towards a more individualised experience of spirituality and spiritual well-being has consequences for the health of the individual and the community and raises the question of how individualised spirituality finds expression and support within community living. It is not unreasonable to suggest that a community is only strong when those within it are encouraged and supported in pursuing their individualised spirituality. Out of that place of strength, people are able freely to give of themselves to the life of the community.

This tension between individual freedom and community responsibility is further explored in the context of the Stourbridge community.

Conclusion

The richness and significance of the co-workers' (note: this includes co-workers and employees) spirituality was apparent throughout our discussions. It was clear that spirituality, either explicitly or implicitly, sat at the heart of their vocation and that it played an important role in their motivation. For those living within the community it was a significant

influence on the way in which they perceive the nature of their communal task. The philosophy of anthroposophy seems to be a significant dimension of most, but not all, people's spirituality. The paths by which people had come to adopt anthroposophy as a 'worldview' were varied, and were predominantly, although not exclusively, through their association with Camphill. There were issues around precisely how spirituality could and should be nurtured within the community. In particular, tension emerged where the spiritual needs of the individual were perceived to be subsumed or run counter to the demands of community living. It was clear that there was a need to think through what the marked changes in spiritual practices meant for the changing spiritual shape of the community. This sense of transition and change flows through all of our encounters with the various communities and is something we will return to in more depth in the conclusion to this report.

Section Five: Spirituality in Camphill Houses, Stourbridge

Part 1: About Camphill Houses, Stourbridge

'Camphill Houses' is a Camphill community without defined physical boundaries. Formed in 1969 as a response to those within the Camphill village communities who wished to further their independence in an urban setting, Camphill Houses consists of seven houses throughout the market town of Stourbridge and one further house plus its five acre garden 2 miles outside, in a rural setting. All the town properties are within walking distance of each other and of the main amenities, such as shops, leisure facilities, churches, library, cafes and pubs. Thus, physically the community is integrated in the life of the town. Stourbridge itself sits in the West Midlands countryside, to the south west of Birmingham, which is easily accessible by public transport.

Camphill Houses aims through its supported living programmes to assist adults with special needs to find a home, work, training and social life which meets their aspirations. As their web site states:
'*enabling individuals to find their direction in life and an appropriate degree of self-reliance*' [11]

Home environments
A range of supported living situations is offered. In four community houses near the centre of town and one on the outskirts, community members with special needs share their home life with co-workers and their families. More independent living is also provided through parallel living in individual or shared flats/house, with support co-workers living next door. Others live in

[11] http://www.camphill.org.uk/~cvt/our-communities/camphill-houses-stourbridge

their own accommodation (rented or owned), but receive on-going support from Camphill Houses.

There are around 45 people in Camphill Houses community, 25 of whom are adults with special needs. In addition 6 part-time employees work within the community. Camphill Houses in general does not have short-term volunteer co-workers.

Education, training and work opportunities
Community residents attend a variety of education and training courses, both at local colleges and within Camphill Houses community, to develop skills for independent living and to further work ambitions. Some of these lead to recognised qualifications such as NVQs.

Historically, and in keeping with its '*raison d'être*', the majority of Camphill Houses community members, both residents and co-workers, were employed within the wider local community. Many residents still aspire to achieve paid employment but this has become increasingly difficult to achieve in today's employment climate. In response, Camphill Houses has developed two enterprises - The Cockleshell Craft Centre and the Ashfield Horticultural Project - to provide work and training opportunities for residents. These also create day placements for other vulnerable people outside the Camphill Houses community.

The Cockleshell Craft Centre operates both as a gift shop and craft centre, open to member of the general public, as well as a work and training base for residents. The centre offers a range of craft based activities from ceramic painting to craft birthday parties. It also provides a workshop space for residents where a variety of hand-crafted items - cards, knitted and woven items - are produced. These along with items from other Camphill centres and local crafts people are sold in the gift shop. While helping to run the centre and shop, residents can work towards an NVQ.

The Ashfield Horticultural Project offers training and work experience in a rural setting, using organic/biodynamic methods to grow produce for sale through a local organic food company. Some of the produce is also consumed within the Camphill Houses community.

Residents also work on a voluntary or paid basis in the local community at a variety of jobs including museum cataloguing assistant, school dinner assistant, charity shop assistant and carer for the elderly. Some contribute to the domestic and maintenance work within the Camphill Houses properties. Camphill Houses also supports some resident who are retired.

Social and cultural life

Unlike the village communities, Camphill Houses does not have a community hall. Community meetings and events are held in a large room in one of the houses, which is mainly used for administrative purposes. Residents participate in social, cultural and religious activities within Stourbridge, attending local interest groups and a variety of church denominations.

There is a Christian Community church and a Waldorf Steiner school in Stourbridge and while there is a degree of association between them, neither is connected to Camphill Houses community.

During the course of our study at Camphill Houses, we worked with 14 residents with special needs, mainly in the context of individual interviews, with 1 focus group of four. Seven co-workers participated in a further 2 focus groups and 1 individual interview. This aspect of the research was carried out by Dr. Aileen Falconer and analysed along with Professor John Swinton.

Part 2: Thematic Reflections on the Spirituality of Camphill Houses Residents

Spirituality: A search for connectedness

As we spent time with people, it very soon became clear that, as per our experiences in other communities, the area of spirituality was significant for the lives of many people in Camphill Houses. The nature and meaning of that significance was similarly diverse and complex. Most, although not all, expressed an overt awareness of a spiritual dimension to their lives. This was sometimes expressed explicitly through involvement in formal religion and the use of religious language, ritual and symbols. For this group of people, there seemed to be a sense in which they viewed the whole of their lives as unfolding within a spiritual context that had God at its centre. Spirituality through religion provided the unifying force which enabled them to make sense of life and cope with life's struggles and searches, issues which, as will become clear, were often related to individual development and acceptance by others and society.

For other participants, their spiritual experiences and the expression of those experiences was more implicit, relating primarily to themselves, their own beliefs and values and their personal life experiences, with no necessary connection to any formal religious structures or wider community. For them, rather than acting as a unifying or underpinning force, spirituality seemed to be expressed within discrete elements of their lives.

Interestingly, bearing in mind the emphasis on community within Camphill and the indications from the literature that many people relate spirituality with some form of experience in community, community living was not generally acknowledged as an expression of spirituality per se and community life was not generally highlighted as a salient feature in the participants' spiritual lives. There was a general sense in which people

seemed to feel that they were forging their own path rather than seeking to be integrated in the framework or structure of the Camphill Houses. We will return to this later in the report, but our intuition is that the particular geographical location of Stourbridge within an urban context meant that there was a considerable degree of interface with the wider society. The expressed need to find their place within that wider society took precedent over a desire to find a similar place within the Camphill Houses community. This was not true for all of the participants, which again emphasises the individuality of spiritual expression amongst the people with whom we spoke. Nevertheless, the lack of emphasis on spirituality and community remains significant.

Above all the participants felt a deep sense that the essential dynamic of their lives comprised a search for connectedness on three levels:

1. with self
2. with others and the wider world
3. with a higher power/s

The degree to which this was evident varied widely from individual to individual, but this threefold structure held firm within the lives of most of the people with whom we spent time.

What is Spirituality?

It was clear that participants found the term spirituality difficult to pin down. Responses to the question 'What does the word spirituality mean to you?' varied and the range of responses gave some indication of the complexity of the topic:

Interviewer*: Gavin what about you, is there any words come to mind?*

Gavin*: Not much. No, I don't really understand it enough. I don't understand it enough.*
Interviewer*: Have you heard the word before Gavin, spirituality?*
Gavin*: Oh yes I've heard of the word, yeah*
Interviewer*: And are there any pictures come into your head when you hear that word?*
Gavin: *Not a lot. No, no*

Gavin was familiar with the term 'spirituality', but not with its meaning or at least with the articulation of that meaning. Matt finds himself in a similar situation:

Interviewer*: What do you associate with that word spirituality?*
Matt*: mm…That's a sort of difficult question that*
Interviewer*: It is quite a difficult question*
Matt*: em [7 sec silence] Can't answer that*
Interviewer*: You can't answer that? It's difficult?*
Matt: *It's too much*

Matt and Gavin's lack of clarity regarding the term spirituality should not be taken as an indication that spirituality was not a significant element in their lives. We have previously discussed how difficult people find it to articulate the meaning of the term and that it has significance even when that is not formally articulated. Whilst they could not define spirituality, as we talked on, it became clear that they did live it out.

For current purposes, we will divide people's understandings quite broadly into two primary categories: religious and non-religious. However, the crossover between these two categories will become apparent as we move on.

Spirituality as Religion

There was a common recognition that religion was part of spirituality and as such, an important means of spiritual expression. In general, the religious beliefs that were expressed were Christian, but not exclusively so. Some people expressed a belief in the Christian God who was encountered in personal experiences particularly during times of trauma or difficulty and other significant life events. For some an on-going relationship with God and with Jesus appeared to be an important anchor in their day-to-day lives. For others God was there, but more remote, and invoked only at times of crisis:

Interviewer*: What would come to mind if we say the word spirituality? What does that mean for you Felicity?*
Felicity*: em…for me it means God or Jesus em the whole church side of it. Although I know there are other gods and things like that. Yeah Jesus and God and Church and the whole Christian thing comes to mind.*
Interviewer*: And is that the part that is important for you?*
Felicity*: Yes it is.*

Although she recognises other religions, Felicity finds her spiritual expression primarily through the Christian tradition. This gives her a clear language and a set of tangible concepts for the expression of her spiritual preferences and experiences. For Felicity, a personal relationship with a God who is protective and supportive of her is an important aspect of her spirituality. God is special to her and she to God, a concept confirmed by experience:

Felicity: *Yeah, yes... and….yeah it's nice having, knowing God's around, Jesus is around if I'm, if you get stuck or depressed or whatever*
Interviewer*: Are there any particular experiences you've had Felicity when you might have said you've been aware of some higher power or God acting in your life or …being present for you?*
Felicity*: When I got confirmed I felt this being around me which was quite supportive*

Interviewer*: What did that feel like Felicity, can you remember?*
Felicity*: Like a warm glow I think, yeah, nice and warm and loved I guess*
Interviewer*: How would you describe your relationship with God or Jesus?*
Felicity*: Probably like a father-figure really…He seems to be there helping me…if I, when I need Him…It's nice knowing He's there…to comfort me or support me …*
Interviewer*: So it's a personal type of relationship?*
Felicity*: yeah yes….although I know He's probably around lots of other people too, you know, He's my sort of support.*

Importantly, Christianity gives Felicity a positive sense of identity which in turn leads to her to act in positive ways towards others:

Interviewer*: What does it mean for you to call yourself a Christian, Felicity?*
Felicity*: Um…it's a special thing…because…it's made me think I'm sort of kind and trying to follow this way… and not to … being sort of a bad...yeah and trying to do good in life, good in the world*

This takes us back to a suggestion made earlier in this report that there appears to be a strong connection between spirituality and altruism. Spirituality is a motivating factor in doing good to and with others. Being a Christian gives Felicity a point of orientation in her life and helps her define herself in a positive way as a 'kind person' whose basic life is lived towards the good. Gordon's experience is similar:

Religion is to understand spirituality. Religion was brought on this earth to get us to understand the spiritual world. That you weren't just created just for the physical reasons. You were created to understand and learn your spiritual being – what it is to love somebody.

For Gordon, religion and spirituality are inextricably intertwined. An understanding of spirituality through the Christian religion leads to the recognition that his purpose on earth is to learn to love God, himself and others. Religion is a vehicle through which he can experience a sense of love and acceptance. Thus, for Felicity and Gordon, religion creates a space within which they can learn what it means to be loved, to love and to act kindly; a space of relationship where they can find and sustain a positive identity which emerges from and through their relationships with God, self and the other.

For Gordon, his relationship with God defines his relationship with himself and with others:

> **Interviewer***: What's your kind of ideas about God then? How does he relate to your life?*
> **Gordon***: I think God, God, I see God as somebody who came on the earth 2000 years ago and He, He in showing you, in guiding you to understand how to work with your spirit, He gives you the path what He feels you're suited to as a spiritual being. And you have to live that task and what He gives you to the best of your ability and you, whether you live it to the best of your ability is another question, but He gives you a task and you have to unravel, you go through your life unravelling, going through all these different tasks, going through all these different hoops and eventually you'll get to what hopefully, even if it's only partly, what God wants you to do*

God for Gordon is both a historic figure and also a present reality. Life is viewed as a spiritual journey initiated by God, in which Gordon's responsibility is to discover his purpose and to fulfil it to the best of his ability. This concept that life, his life, has a God-given meaning and purpose had positive consequences for Gordon's sense of self-worth and self-esteem.

Further, Gordon not only sees his life originating but also unfolding within a spiritual framework and this appears to have practical implications for his life:

And I think generally things, God actually finds you things and these things come together when He feels it's right for you … He knew that I was not very good at shift work and I need to find something that's more settled, that I can handle properly. I think He gives you signs. You have to go through a, you have to step back a bit and then go and start on another path and these signs, this not being able to do this work has, was a sense of saying 'You're good at the work Gordon but I don't think you, I don't think, because of the state that your body is in and you got the needs that you've got I don't think that work suits you for those hours or putting pressure on yourself to do'. So this is like a learning curve – I have to step backwards in order to go forwards

Gordon sees God - a personal God who knows and has Gordon's best interests at heart - as continually interacting in his life. His concept of God, backed up by his life experiences, has developed beyond the idea of a God who fixes everything. Gordon perceives that it is his responsibility to discern and interpret God-given signs in his life 'correctly'- in a way that leads to inner and outer development and ultimately to fulfilment of his life's purpose.

Thus, a religious framework was an important stance from which Gordon, like others with whom we talked, could adopt a wider and more positive perspective on his life, especially its struggles, disappointments and difficulties. Interpreting his life experiences within the context of the outworking of a God-given purpose helped Gordon make sense of his life, cope with its uncertainties and provided a certain sense of security that all will work out well for him in the end. It gave him a sense of a bigger purpose to life and sense of a direction for his own life.

In times of crisis people also expressed that religion provided a vehicle for coping. Doug and Holly located the source of this support somewhat differently - Doug emphasised his relationship with God, and Holly her religious framework:

Interviewer*: Is God or Jesus a part of your life Doug then?*
Doug*: Very, very important*
Interviewer*: Can you tell me a bit about that then?*
Doug*: Well, you just, helps*
Interviewer*: So God helps you?*
Doug*: Sometimes just helps*
Interviewer*: In what way Doug?*
Doug*: If I've had an upset with one of the other people, He's just there*
Interviewer*: So what kind of feeling do you get that let's you know that He's there for you?*
Doug*: I dunno I just feel that there's sometimes He's there but sometimes He's not. Cause I think about Him a lot but sometimes, sometimes He comes and sometimes He doesn't.*

God appears to be very much part of Doug's life as an important source of support. It is interesting that Doug recounts that his experience of God is not a constant nor it is under his control but that does not seem to cause him to doubt its reality or his ability to draw comfort from it.

Holly puts it somewhat differently:

It [religion] *is important. It's … I'm just speaking from experience. It's a thing that one needs when one is sort of…in an upset mode or is not very happy, you know, you have different things that you can do. You can study a bit for yourself, you can speak with other people, you can become knowledgeable to other people as well and you can actually pick up from other people something that you could basically learn yourself.*

Religion, again in Holly's case the Christian religion, was perceived as not only a broad way in which she found expression for her spirituality, but also as a coping mechanism which gave her a structure for dealing with the complexities of life's vicissitudes.

Other forms of religion

Whilst some participants rooted their religious experiences firmly within the Christian tradition, the significance of religion was not confined to that tradition. For example, two of the people with whom we spoke found the pagan religion to be the most helpful place for them to express their spirituality. Amelia's religious experience began within Christianity, but has now taken quite a different path:

> *I was a Christian, but, I moved on because I thought that I didn't fit into that category any more. And I looked at my life and literally for three, four or five months, I don't remember how long it took me to decide that I was going to stay Christian, or go pagan completely. Eventually I just said, 'no, right, this is who I am, I am pagan. I can't be Christian'.*

The movement from Christian to pagan was a gradual and thoughtful process, which involved Amelia coming to terms with the incompatibility of her belief in multiple gods and goddesses with the central emphasis on a single God that is vital for the Christian tradition. As she put it: *'I'm interested in all gods and all goddesses, and I respect all forms of life.'* The importance of such beliefs for her spirituality was such that remaining within the Christian tradition had become impossible.

Tom's experience of pagan religion was noticeably different and raised quite different issues. Whilst Amelia's movement into paganism was gradual and based on theological issues, which drew her away from Christianity in a somewhat gentle way, Tom's adherence to paganism was revealed in terms which were much more hostile towards Christianity:

Tom*: I think there's no God at all. There are other people go out thieving some things are not there*
Interviewer*: So you don't think there's a God?*
Tom*: No*
Interviewer*: Do you know why you don't think that Tom?*
Tom*: Well if God did let us destroy the world and that sort of thing*

Tom clearly saw no need to believe in God and had no desire to engage with traditional religion. Instead, he found his spirituality better worked out within paganism:

Interviewer*: What religion are you comfortable with then Tom?*
Tom: *Paganism, paganism…Believe in nature*
Interviewer*: Right so it's very based in nature*
Tom: *Mmm very based in nature –sun, rain, moon*
Interviewer*: Ok, does that belief have a positive effect in your life or a negative effect?*
Tom*: Well I believe in a positive...*
Interviewer*: And in paganism is there a higher power that you have a relationship with, that you talk to or relate to Tom? Something greater than yourself?*
Tom: *About looking after the earth, food we grow in the gardens and that sort of thing*
Interviewer*: So the higher power helps that, is that what you're saying?*
Tom*: Yeah*
Interviewer*: Ok and is this higher power, a higher power that you can have a personal relationship with or not?*
Tom*: Not –I felt it being with a group of people, pagans together*

The focus of Tom's religion was on that which is earthly, embodied and grounded in nature. There is a higher power involved, but that higher power appears to be immanent rather than transcendent. Whilst the focus of his

religion appears not to be particularly tied in with relationships, personal relationships seem to remain significant and he has encountered that significance as he has experienced community with other pagans. It is not our intention here to attempt to guess Tom's reasons for choosing paganism, but he certainly appeared to be significantly disenfranchised from the Christian tradition and his experiences of church had left him significantly disaffected in relation to this form of religion. A focus on paganism expressed his continuing need to work out his spirituality, but within a framework which helped him avoid the issues that had caused him pain and distress in the past. Tom's pagan religion thus enabled him both to find a grounding for his spirituality within a formal tradition which allows him to make sense of the world and provided him with a mechanism for coping with the hurts of his past that have emerged from his negative experiences within the Christian church.

Struggle between good and evil

One issue, which emerged time and again with the Camphill Houses residents, was the perceived struggle between good and evil. This was particularly interesting insofar as it raised questions not only with regard to the idea of spiritual warfare, but also in relation to whether the term 'spirituality' is in fact inherently good, or whether it is a morally neutral term which can also be used to refer to things which are not normally perceived as 'good'.

Some of our participants perceived that in life there was an ongoing struggle between good and evil at an individual and at a global level. At an individual level, this struggle manifested for some as negative impulses within themselves, which they identified as '*demons*':

Interviewer*: When you say the demon within you, do you just take that to mean all the negative emotions that come up within you?*
Tom*: Uhhuh, yeah*

Interviewer*: and when you think about yourself are you comfortable with yourself and who you are Felicity?*

Felicity: A *bit better than I was because I've been getting help for it because I keep having these nasty demons… Yeah I used to self-harm and stuff. Now I'm getting help for that and I haven't done it in ages…*

Interviewer*: So when you say demons, were you thinking of an actual physicality or more of an influence Felicity?*

Felicity*: Yes, physicality I think like in anger. It's like me shouting but I wasn't shouting verbally, it was just in my head. And this voice in my head was saying 'don't do it' and I was either afraid or just couldn't*

Interviewer*: and was the demon the voice in your head (***Felicity***: yeah) or was the demon the anger, Felicity?*

Felicity*: A bit of both, I think yeah. There's probably two in that case. Because there's one saying 'don't do this' and the other doing the action*

Interviewer*: So were the demons then for you the negative things that you didn't want to be doing?*

Felicity*: Yeah I think so yeah*

Interviewer*: Now being able to express yourself better you feel that's receding, it's getting less?*

Felicity*: I think so yeah, a little bit*

Expressing inner conflict in religious or spiritual language seemed to help some people create a picture of their inner experience and to communicate that experience to others. Felicity seemed to differentiate between her conscious and unconscious impulses and feelings. She displayed a degree of self-awareness and a need to end this inner fragmentation through expressing her feelings as a means of achieving well-being. Others were most acutely aware of this inner conflict when receiving communion during church services:

You need to control those bad thoughts but sometimes I don't think God's against you having that problem –I think He knows to be a human being

you're being tested even when you're have the bread and wine your mind's being tested ..but if you worry about everything you were thinking each Sunday and whether it was clean you'd be dead! Do you know what I mean –you'd die of, you'd be frightened. It would kill you. So sometimes you just have to say 'ok I'm just not very brill yet again'. You'd be like a nervous wreck cause you haven't got to be perfect in the front of God who knows you, knows you're a human being. Your whole being's being tested. If you want to say your whole life is having this experience.

It seemed as if in striving for perfection and communion, Gordon's imperfection and distance from God was made more obvious. His experience that at times of greatest spiritual awareness there is the potential for greatest doubt resonates in interesting ways with St. John of the Cross' 'dark night of the soul'; a specific phase in a person's spiritual journey marked by darkness, loneliness and isolation. But, that phase is but a moment in a deeper movement towards an intimate relationship with God. Gordon moves through this conflict to resolution through self-acceptance, even of his 'shadow side'. He voices a belief that God knows his weaknesses and understands the human predicament. He realises he need not be afraid to be his imperfect self before Him. This attitude displays a significant degree of insight and spiritual awareness.

On the more global aspects of the struggle between good and evil the contrasting viewpoints of two individuals illustrate how one's conceptual stance influences the interpretation of events/experiences and reciprocally how one's experiences form and inform one's concepts:

Interviewer*: What are your ideas about other spiritual beings?*
Duncan*: Well I think there's certainly other beings which are not necessarily mortal that just, I think, just forces which are trying to channel people into doing things that are constructive rather than destructive*

For Duncan the spiritual forces that influence the physical world through humans were seen as positive forces, trying to guide people to constructive rather than destructive acts. In contrast, Tom focuses on elements that are more destructive:

Tom*: There's not such a thing called heaven -it's called hell. Hell and the whole world is full of death and hate*
Interviewer*: What makes you think it is full of death and hate?*
Tom*: mm just got strong hate thing*
Interviewer*: So is your idea of hell made up from what you experience in the world (***Tom***: mm) just now? Do you think you would have a different view if your experience of the world now were different?*
Tom*: Mhmm*
Interviewer*: What, how do you think your view would change?*
Tom*: Love and peace. Sure, there's no love in the world, there's no peace in the world*
Interviewer*: What makes you say that?*
Tom*: There's all the wars going on and the killing*
Interviewer*: So are there no good things going on in the world?*
Tom*: Not really, no*
Interviewer*: Nothing at all? Nothing's good? So there's no kindness in people at all?*
Tom*: Not really. Not many kindness people around*
Interviewer*: Do you think that's true of everybody or is that just your experience of life Tom?*
Tom*: My experience of life*

Tom's position is interesting. He certainly acknowledges that if his experience were different his outlook on life might also be altered and there is an extent to which his stance regarding the state of the world reflects something of his own inner conflicts. And yet, what he says is quite correct. In a world where 27,000 children die every day from starvation and avoidable illnesses, a

world which is full of war, murder and mayhem, the reflection that 'the world is full of destruction and hatred' may be jarring within a conversation on spirituality (where the normal expectation is discussion on love, acceptance, warmth, peace etc), but it is no less true for that. Empirically Tom's position with regard to the state of the world is probably more accurate than those who would claim the world to be filled with love and peace. Tom's statement indicating that the idea of heaven and, by implication, a loving God makes no sense when you look at the world is uncomfortable, but understandable. He like all of us longs for love and peace, but finds little indication of that as a possible life course either in his own life or in the wider life of the world. His is a dark spirituality, but it is nonetheless valid for that.

This raises questions as to whether or not a basic experience of love, peace, goodness, kindness in our lives is essential to a positive view of the spiritual dimension. One of the other participants voices this view:

> *I think you're, the sort of love you have been given when you come onto the earth makes you have a strong feeling of warmth. I think if my mother would hit me every day and kick me about, I don't think I would have a very good chance of having a very good spiritual well-being*

The contrast and tension between those who viewed spirituality as positive, meaningful and based on love and relationship with those who saw it as more dark and nihilistic illustrates the important point that spirituality per se in neither inherently 'good' or 'bad' and can manifest itself both positively and negatively. There is therefore no obvious reason why one view should be supported and encouraged over and above other views. This of course becomes troubling when one is faced with modes of spirituality with which one might feel inherently uneasy, such as one participant's propensity towards Satanism:

Tom*: It* [Satan] *was saying this world is going to end. And I agree with it*

that this world is going to end one day and he [Satan] *want to take over the world*

Interviewer*: Who'll take over the world?*

Tom*: Satan and that sort of thing. Evil there's plenty of evil in the world*

Interviewer*: Does that bother you at all?*

Tom*: No, not really*

Interviewer*: So for you, does it feel comfortable that evil takes over the world?*

Tom*: Mm cause I'm not bothered*

This raises another important issue. Tom is a pagan, with a very different spirituality and spiritual needs from others around him. He sees the world quite differently. And yet, as one reflects on what he says, it is not at all clear that his spirituality is pathological or simply indicative of previous problems and issues. Quite the opposite, aspects of it make perfect sense. This is particularly so if we accept the broad ranging definitions of spirituality that, as we saw in the introduction to this report, are commonly accepted as the norm within British culture. The question for care and support givers is how does one hold together an approach to spiritual care which values the perspectives of all people, including those with quite disturbing spiritualities, without judging one against the other, making moral decisions on the basis of our own morality alone or assuming that one form of spirituality should have epistemological priority over another?

Spirituality as more than religion

While religion and more formal spiritual structures remained important for some people, there was also a clear series of themes which indicated that people had an idea that spirituality, whilst including religion, could not be defined by it. Duncan put this point well:

At one time I saw it probably wholly in religious terms but lately I think the

idea of spirituality is all around us… it's just a matter of looking in the right places…

Duncan's understanding has moved from one within which spirituality is bound by the parameters of religion, to a broader view that spirituality can in fact be discovered in other places. His statement '*it's just a matter of looking in the right places'*, suggests that spirituality has to do with finding new ways of looking at the world which will enable us to see different things, or perhaps better, to see things differently. In a real sense, he calls us to begin to recognise that there is *something more* to life than we might normally assume.

Something more

The idea of 'something more' ran through many of our interviews. As mentioned, there was clearly some degree of uncertainty about the concept of 'spirituality'. Nevertheless, there was a constant and clear impression that spirituality expressed an intuitive knowledge that human beings are more than physical beings. As per the embodiedness and relationality of Gordon and Felicity's altruistic perspectives on Christianity, and the earthiness of Tom's paganism, the physical dimensions of human existence remain important. Yet, time and again participants told us that they felt there was 'something more' and that this recognition of, and at times longing for, something beyond the immediate, the material and the tangible, was central to what spirituality was about. This 'something more' could not be fully encapsulated by religion. It required a wider definition of the term 'spirituality.' Gordon articulates this feeling:

Gordon*: [spirituality is] understanding … who you are. There's more to you than just filling shelves. You're a human being. I'm just, I was… ok I'm not overly religious, I'm in between. What I'm saying is there's more to you and … this is what Camphill has helped me to understand more; there's more to you than just Gordon Walsh*

Interviewer*: What is that 'more' Gordon as you understand it?*
Gordon*: I have a spiritual being*
Interviewer*: How do you understand that?*
Gordon*: Oh right gosh, ah-hah I often struggle to understand that myself!… When we go to sleep at night… we go into that spiritual being … that is part of me. Spiritual being which is, … it's me on the earth but I'm a spiritual, when I go to sleep at night, I become a spiritual being. I'm part of God. I am part of God when I'm in my body –I'm now part of God, you're part of God but when you go into that spiritual state, I don't have to worry about having special needs. For those several hours I'm like living, apart from dreams that come down, I'm actually back to being perfect again.*

As was mentioned previously, Gordon centres his spirituality in the Christian religion. But he remains very much aware that there are wider dimensions of spirituality that are not fully captured by his tradition. For Gordon humans are more than the physical. The ability to recognise this inner essence of a person is not dependent on being religious. Spirituality is the process of recognising your own sense of being a spiritual person who is deeply and intimately related with God. It is interesting that Gordon associates the freedom from the stigma of his intellectual disability with his spiritual being. It is when he enters the 'spiritual state' with God and in God that he discovers a liberation from the label 'special needs', and encounters himself in quite a different way from the way he does at other times and in other places. Rather than his special needs proving to be a barrier to his spirituality, in a strange reversal of normal cultural assumptions they become the gateway to spiritual revelation:

So I think having in some ways having special needs even although I don't like it, it helps my purpose a little bit more. You probably want to be connected to God a little bit more. Cause you want the help, you want the warmth

Connection with God, *acceptance* and *meaningful relationships* seem to sum up something of the essence of Gordon's understanding of spirituality[12]. Here we should note the potential of spirituality for reframing, in a positive light, experiences which society assumes to be profoundly negative.

The realms of body, mind and spirit

It is worthwhile drawing attention to an interesting observation that emerged from the overall findings in Stourbridge, and that is the way in which spirituality located itself quite distinctly within different areas of the person: body, mind and spirit. Whilst remaining a holistic concept, for some of the participants it was clear that spirituality, whilst certainly relating to the whole person, was often compartmentalised into particular realms of body, mind and what we might loosely call the spirit or spiritual realm.

The realm of the body

As one might expect, some participants expressed their understanding of 'spirituality' directly in terms of the philosophy of the Camphill communities. For example when asked what comes to mind when she hears the word 'spirituality', Lillian stated: '*Heavenly beings, spiritual world –they do that a lot here you know with Anthroposophy- spiritual world you know'.* Lillian had learned a particular language of spirituality through her involvement with Camphill. Hence, the communities' formal understanding of spirituality had become her primary association. However, running in tension with this was the fact that her own spirituality was expressed primarily through her connection with the local Church of England, a connection that she expressed to us as being a significant element in her life. Thus, she used the language of Camphill to express her formal understanding of the term 'spirituality', but a different tradition to express and work out that understanding. Precisely

[12] It is important to note that in the language and understanding of participants, the term "god" did not always relate to a specific religious tradition, but rather often functioned as a free floating symbol or representative experience which had a profound impact on people's life experiences.

why this might be is unclear. However, we might get some clues from the experience of Daisy. On first approach, Daisy stated that the term 'spirituality' found no resonance within her life:

Interviewer*: Daisy, what other words come to mind for you if you hear that word spirituality?*
Daisy*: It doesn't feature anything in me really*
Interviewer*: Nothing comes?*
Daisy*: No, nothing comes out of it really.*

On the surface, it looked as if it was not something which Daisy perceived as an important part of her life. Yet, as we talked on, it became clear that her reluctance to identify with the term 'spirituality' may have been at least partly due to a negative association between the philosophy of Camphill and what she understood spirituality to be:

Interviewer*: Did you have any idea that spirituality or a kind of religious or spiritual part of life was important to people in Camphill Houses?*
Daisy*: Mmm... No, not really, no. I mean people do but I'm not in that realm. I'm not, I don't like that spiritual bit you could say.*
Interviewer*: What is it that you don't like about that spiritual bit then Daisy?*
Daisy*: I mean it's all very high and very… it's all very complicated [laughs] for me. I don't like complicated things*

Her perception that spirituality is *'high'* and *'complicated'* appeared to have created a significant barrier to any desire to explore the concept further. We might speculate that her issues, perhaps in like-manner to some of the observations made in previous sections of this report, arise from the intellectual slant of anthroposophy in Camphill. This caused Daisy to feel inferior and prevented her from considering spirituality, or perhaps better, that particular understanding of spirituality, as significant for her life.

Nevertheless, despite her overt lack of interest in things spiritual, a deeper reflection reveals that Daisy sought out spiritual expression in different ways, primarily through relational experiences, in particular her relationship with her husband. Such experiences are embodied, tactile and tangible; things which she can grasp and relate to in ways that don't demand extended use of the intellect. People rather than intellectual constructs formed the essence of her spirituality:

Daisy*: …the best thing in my life was when I got married*
Interviewer*: What for you does that* [marriage relationship] *add to your life or why is it important for you Daisy?*
Daisy*: Well because you, well your husband is important I think as well as your other members of your family but he's important cause he wasn't, you don't always find a man like that do you really quickly? I was lucky. And he's very nice. Lovely*
Interviewer*: Well are there other things that are part of your life that if they weren't there you would miss Daisy, other than people?*
Daisy: *I don't think so I think I'm ok [laughs]*

Relationships seemed to be the most important things in Daisy's life, providing her life with meaning and purpose. Her marriage relationship affirms her self-worth and gives her a sense of meaning and purpose in her life. Being 'chosen' by another human being as worthy of love, is an important affirmation of one as a person of value. Indeed, Josef Pieper highlights this as the very definition of love: 'Love is saying to the other, "It's good that you exist; its good that you are in this world."' (Pieper 1998). If love is the essence of spirituality, then we can begin to see how Daisy's spirituality-in-relationship works itself out. It could therefore be said that loving relationships are the means by which spirituality is expressed.

<u>Connecting with God and others through relationships</u>
While Daisy's perspective is representative of a view of spirituality which is

totally embodied within human relationships with no necessity for God or any form of God object, others inhabited an interesting space between understanding spirituality as purely to do with human relationships and a view which assumes that the spirituality expressed in human relationships involves, and indeed emerges from, a person's relationship with God[13]. For example, Duncan expressed the idea that the spirit within each human has an intimate connection with the spirit of God. When asked by the interviewer whether his spiritual experience was something that came from within or without, Duncan said:

Duncan*: Well I think it's the spirit within. It's the spirit within but I suspect it's all to do with the spirit without*
Interviewer*: And the spirit without, is it connected to God, the spiritual world or what Duncan for you?*
Duncan*: Well it's connected with God I suppose also and the other spiritual beings as well em [pause] I think that's all I can say about that*

For Duncan spirituality contained ideas about the spirit immanent and also the Spirit transcendent. His implication is that spirituality has to do with not only our relationship with God (vertical relationship) but also with other people and ourselves (horizontal relationships):

Duncan*: Well the spiritual world I suppose is social reactions between people*
Interviewer*: Social reactions between people?*
Duncan*: Yeah*
Interviewer*: Right. So not to do with something above or higher than people?*
Duncan*: Well partly that and partly… the I suppose to do with the contact between God and us*

[13] again it should be noted that the term 'god' as some participants used it, did not necessarily have any formal connection with religion

This intimate connection between Divine and human spiritual relationships was developed by Gordon in a slightly different way:

> *If we had more time for our workers in Marks and Spencer, the work force would work better. If I would greet your spiritual soul and work with you and understand who you are, rather than just knowing that you can help me label up the trousers in Marks and Spencer's I'd then start to understand you more than just what you can do physically*

Gordon and Duncan's perspectives are important at a number of levels. Unlike some forms of what we might call 'self-centred' spirituality, their spiritual perspective is not purely focused on the inner workings of themselves and their own spiritual desires and experiences. They seem to recognise that there is something deeply spiritual about human beings (the spirit within), but at the same time, that spirituality is brought to fruition as it encounters the Divine Spirit (the Spirit without). The ongoing conversation between the inner and the outer spirit leads Gordon in particular, to view people quite differently. In recognising the dialogue of the spirit as it takes place within the other, we are freed to take time to notice different things in those whom we encounter. These 'different things' allow one to *know* people rather than simply 'knowing about them'. In other words, the spiritual dialogue allows a person to see the other as an end in themselves rather than as a means to a greater end. Awareness of one's spirituality seems to lead to altruistic actions focusing on a desire to relate to others and to God in personal rather than abstracted ways. The idea that in connecting with another, we are connecting with their inner spirit, the essence of their being, indicates a perception that relationships can in essence be spiritual encounters, a theme which had also emerged with co-workers in Aberdeen and Botton.

The realm of the mind/intellect

What is problematic for Daisy in an intellectual approach to spirituality is precisely what is important for Gordon. As we talked and as Gordon began to work out his thinking on the term spirituality, it became clear that the intellectual aspects of spirituality were important to him:

> *Spirituality means...It means more than...just an earthly human being. It's the you, and now I've thought about it, it's the more perfect you….As time's gone on in the conversation I've discovered that yes the spiritual being is the perfect you but because when you're put onto the earth you're no longer...you only feel more more at self and at ease when you sleep, well when you're not being burdened by the earth –because you're being burdened by this earthly matter now. Your being gets lost with this now feeling, now that your perfection of what you are as a spiritual being can't, don't carry on I suppose in the same way as they would if it was permanently in heaven I think*

Spirituality for Gordon seemed to be about a part of us that was more than just our physicality; an inner spiritual essence that, no matter what our outward appearance may be, was 'perfect'. Gordon's emphasis is on a more intellectualised spirituality. The focus on the intellect was not a strong theme for the project. Nevertheless, bearing in mind the intellectual roots of anthroposophy and the continuing significance of this way of thinking for practice, there remains a need to explore precisely how this functions in terms of people's spirituality, if in fact it functions at all. The indications from the people we spoke to is that it can work both ways insofar as it alienates some and remains important for others.

The realm of the spirit/spirit world

Whilst Daisy focuses on the body as the expression of her spirituality, and Gordon tends to prioritise the mind, Amelia finds her focus on 'the spirit' and its interaction with what she described as 'the spirit world.' This is the place

where her spirituality is perceived as most significant. Amelia's spirituality was almost entirely tied in with her psychic experiences, leaving less energy or interest for the more physical or intellectual aspects of her life:

I have been spiritually reawakened and that is one of the best things at the moment… over the past year I've had more guides come to me, for different reasons, I help many types of spirits. I help fairies and I help people that are lost, and every so often, I'm giving you an estimate, every 2 months I'm given a challenge. It takes so much energy out of you that your physical self is sort of swept away and at the moment I'm a bit like that.

However, Amelia's beliefs stretch beyond the psyche and into a realm which is clearly different from anything else she experiences, a realm she describes as 'the spiritual world.' Within this realm she encounters a multitude of spiritual beings all of whom she claims, impact her life in important ways. These were the beings that guided and prompted her spiritual development and aided her in her task of helping others. She also perceived she had a reciprocal relationship with some, in which she aided their development as much as they aided hers.

Amelia: *So I just got to know my guides, I got to know their names, and um, how they relate to me, and where they will touch me if they need to ask me a question. At the time that was how they did it, now I just turn to them and ask… But my guides help me, I do ask them a lot of questions and I use the tarot cards, and things like that. But they listen to me and I listen to them. And they don't always give you the answers but they're there to step in and say, look sorry you're on the wrong direction, right if you don't listen to me now this is what we're going to do… But then I've also got to look after the fairies…There's a reason why they come into my life. And I think that's what a lot of people forget, is that they've got guides, they're not actually alone. And that's one thing that I'm very*

grateful for. When I was told that look, you have this gift, but you have people to help you too, well guides to help you too. Lots of people are told they have the gift but not told they have guides. So they feel all alone, so they usually become depressed people.

Interviewer*: It seems though that when you were talking about some of your guides that you were the one that was having to take care of them, rather than the other way around.*

Amelia*: Yes, sometimes it is that way.*

Amelia's understanding of her spirituality is much more akin to what we might describe as an 'informal spiritualism'. Although she has no formal connection with the spiritualist church, the imagery and the people she chooses to populate he spiritual world indicates at least a tacit knowledge of some of the ideas present within spiritualism. (Tarot cards, spirit guides, communication with the dead.) Maintaining her relationship with these spirit beings was perceived by Amelia's as her primary role in life and it was this that gave a deep and rich sense of meaning and purpose to her life.

Other participants also mentioned spiritual beings, mainly angels which, whilst perceived as very real, were more peripheral to their core beliefs than Amelia's spiritual world. For some, the idea of guardian angels provided comfort, but this was at times tempered by a degree of scepticism as to their actual involvement in day-to-day life:

Interviewer*: Right. So are angels something that you believe in?*

Lillian*: Yes I do, I got lots of books on angels. Some people don't believe in angels but I do...I have read in lots of books that some people have actually had angels to help them*

Interviewer*: Is that something you've experienced?*

Lillian*: Not really no but eh I like anything to do with angels –you know books and pictures, that sort of thing*

Interviewer*: You mentioned Michael. Is this idea of angels something that*

you find supportive.

Felicity*: Yes, yes. Yeah I probably, in fact I don't think I have a guardian angel anymore because I'm forty*

Interviewer*: Does your guardian angel go away after you're a certain age?*

Felicity*: I think so. I think he does yeah. I may be wrong but he sometimes help me –like I nearly knock over a saucepan full of beans or something and it doesn't quite go, I'm thinking 'Ok [laughs]..' Well it's just luck I think at the end of the day…*

Interviewer*: And with regards to the angel, the sort of angel Michael, is that something that's a kind of important concept for you or something more peripheral to your basic beliefs?*

Felicity: *I suppose it's peripheral in a way because I'm not a deep believer in all these things. I don't know a great deal about it but I know, I mean that he's... and he, well I suppose he exists in Camphill…talked about, yeah*

Interviewer*: When you say 'all these things' do you mean the kind of things round anthroposophy and things that are...*

Felicity*: Mhmm talked about yeah*

It was difficult to know where Felicity got her ideas about angels. She was aware of the significance of angels and especially the archangel Michael within Camphill/anthroposophy, which may have given content to her ideas. However, she is not a deep believer in anthroposophy and expressed doubts about some of its concepts, particularly those which she has not come across outwith Camphill. Nevertheless, the idea of angels retained some significant for her.

Relationships as an expression of spirituality

We have already highlighted in this and preceding sections of the report some of the ways in which people's relationships enabled them to find integration as they engaged in finding meaning in their lives. It will be useful

at this point to develop this more fully. As with the Botton residents, relationships were highlighted as one of the most important non-religious conduits for people's spirituality. If the key spiritual questions that all of us ask relate to: 'Who am I? Where do I come from? Where am I going to and why?' then, on reflection, it is clear that our relationships on both a temporal and a transcendent plane begin to answer precisely these questions. This was certainly so for our participants:

Interviewer*: What gives you life, meaning and purpose do you think?*
Matt*: Having friendly people around*
Interviewer*: Why do you think that is Matt? Why does that help you feel a sense of meaning and purpose in your life having people around you?*
Matt*: em…Stops you getting lonely…*
Interviewer*: If I was to ask you Doug what are the things that are important to you in life what would you say do you think is important?*
Doug*: Having friends and having a job, having a job, well friends and having a job and stuff*
Interviewer*: These are the two things that…*
Doug*: Stand out*
Interviewer*: Why are these things important Doug do you think for you?*
Doug*: Because it, I just think, it just feels better, it feels good to have friends.*

The types of relationships that people expressed as spiritually significant did not seem to relate specifically to their living within the Camphill Houses community. Often it was relationships with people who lived outside of the Camphill Houses – whether at church, college or work – that seemed to be more important. The general consensus on the reasons for this seemed to revolve around the need to find acceptance by the wider society.

In terms of community relationships, these seemed to centre on the support structures offered by the co-workers and relatively less on the relationships

between residents, although for some the companionship of those they lived with was clearly important. Relationships within the community sometimes came across as rather tenuous or strained, with some expressing a lack of awareness of others, a strong sense of individuality and, at times, feelings of isolation. The range and variety of relationships engaged in also appeared to be more limited in comparison with, for example, Botton.

Connection with the self

For some relationships with others helped them to develop a more healthy connection to themselves. For Gordon this has come to some extent through his family relationships: *It's* [my family] *made me feel wanted, it's made me feel equal.*

Duncan has a sense that relationships make him '*more whole*' and enable him to more fully realise his potential. Important in this respect was the ongoing daily contact with others - a reciprocal giving and receiving:

Interviewer*: Friendships-Is that an important thing in your life Duncan having people around?*
Duncan*: Yes*
Interviewer*: In what ways is that important for you?*
Duncan*: Well sharing meal with people em I like helping people and I suppose they like helping me as well so*
Interviewer*: So that interaction of caring for each other*
Duncan*: Yeah*
Interviewer*: Anything else Duncan?*
Duncan*: I suppose it makes me more whole but I'm not sure how to explain that one, but that's a difficult one to explain I think*

Relationships therefore seem to be conduits for enabling a healthy sense of self and a feeling of 'completeness'.

Connection to others

Relationships were also significant in allowing individuals to move outside of themselves and towards others; to broaden their horizons. In addition, they offered the necessary support to enable that to happen. Through relationship with others some saw they could contribute to life and saw their purpose in life being fulfilled:

> **Interviewer***: What are the things that give your life meaning and purpose?*
>
> **Gordon***: Giving, accepting people, people being wanted. Helping people, helping people to achieve things that I haven't. Looking, helping people, giving people the support and help and warmth in life that might not been given to them –like helping them in hospital or in the nursing home, giving them supports –the sort of warmth that their families can't give them 24 hours a day or even if it's for one afternoon or you know, sort of giving them support… you have time to listen to them and to understand them as people, as human beings even if they've got… even though he has all his breakfast, wears his, wears his breakfast all day on his clothes, there's a person behind –even though the clothes, he doesn't know how to look after himself, there's a human being, a human being that's been, has had it difficult*

For Gordon his life gains meaning and purpose when he is able to give to others, to address them as human beings despite external appearance, to connect with the essence of who they are – to feel he can make a difference to their life. Through serving others, Gordon perceived he served a higher purpose. Thus, relationships for Gordon were essentially spiritual in nature and the means by which he felt able to achieve his purpose in this world. Engaging in relationships was a practical outworking of his spirituality. Gordon was not alone in recognising the spiritual significance of relationships. As with the other communities, most of our participants felt the same way. For Duncan and Felicity, helping others through relationships was also a

motivating force in life:

Interviewer*: What would you say is your source of hope in life? What makes you get up in the morning and motivates you to face the next day?*
Duncan*: I suppose it is em I think it's to do well maybe I'm better, what motivates me is to I suppose to do as much good as I can for other people I mean*
Felicity*: So I try and be a friend to them. Yeah I try and do, behave how they'd like me to behave to them I think. But I'm not very good at talking to them but I can give them something I think*
Interviewer*: What kind of something do you think you bring to the friendship Felicity?*
Felicity*: Maybe just my nature and my sort of… not very angry or bad tempered or anything. My calming nature or whatever. Maybe I can give some advice*

Here Felicity grasps one of the most spiritually significant aspects of relationships – the giving of the self, who we are, to the other.

Building relationships

If relationships can act as a vehicle for spirituality, then factors facilitating the building of relationships are clearly of interest. Some found relationship building easy, others less so. Interestingly the setting, whether within Camphill Houses or otherwise, seemed relatively less important as an influencing factor on relational development than the individuals themselves:

…cause I make friends very easily…It doesn't make any difference. If I weren't in Camphill, I would still make them

Making friends is something Doug finds easy; it is something he's good at and an area where he doesn't feel 'disabled'. This issue of a person's particular disability and their ability to make friendships and meaningful

relationships was raised by some. Some people had experienced that having special needs, 'being different', was a barrier to friendship:

Felicity: *A bit more so now than I did say at school. I had a few then but I realise that I had difficulties and they didn't know what they were until I came to Camphill or even yeah just leaving school I knew they were much cleverer than I was…em then I was here and around people who had problems like me*
Interviewer*: And does that make it easier to make friendships?*
Felicity*: Yes it does I think mhmm*

Making friendships for Felicity is easier within Camphill due the fact that there are others who have similar life experiences to her own. Within this context the feeling of being 'different' is diminished.

Of course, the art of making friendships takes time:

Interviewer*: Do you find it quite easy to make friends Matt?*
Matt*: No I don't*
Interviewer*: You find it quite hard?*
Matt*: Well I used to make friends but it takes you a while to get to know somebody to speak to*
Interviewer*: Right*
Matt*: I can't really go up to speak to somebody straight away. It takes about a year to get to know somebody properly til I like speaking with them*

One of the problems people with special needs encounter is that society moves very fast and people simply don't take time to make friends with those who are perceived as different. The advantage of the Camphill community was that it was a place where people took time to become friends. Matt found making friends easier within the Camphill community

setting since he was to an extent already 'known' and knew that others would be understanding and take time to be supportive of his needs.

In contrast, for others community living made some aspects of relationships more difficult due to lack of privacy and the impact of others' moods on them. This could be a source of unhappiness:

there have been places where I haven't had very happy times living in community because sometimes I think, the others will agree with me, it's quite difficult sometimes to actually have a conversation, have a conversation with somebody sitting around the meal table. You get people flying off the handle if somebody says something to you. You get 'Oh I can't do this no I'm going into my room' and this person storms off and 'Oh leave it to it, it's alright'. Now that's you know it's very difficult to make relationships and friendships. You've got to work at it.

It also emerged that this 'being known' for who you are - with all your faults and failings as well as your attributes - while having a positive aspect (as expressed by Matt), could also have a negative side. Gordon perceived that it was possible to be 'too well known' when living in a Camphill community and that this could engender an over-cautious approach to ambitions, limiting potential and opportunities. This 'holding back' was perceived by Gordon as interfering with his spiritual well-being:

you know that you've got needs and it has been brought over like that but you know even when you're trying , you're improving on your self I feel Camphill Houses have somehow, holds, hold back a little bit the person. Rather than say –'yeah carry on, go forth' I think in the beginning the time of learning certain skills were kept holding back a little bit longer than needed to be.

To sum up, most people viewed relationships as important and basically good

elements in life, although at times they could be an area of challenge and struggle. They enabled people to become more self aware, to become more complete in themselves, to connect with others and the wider world, to contribute with others. For meaningful relationships, it seemed that people needed to be free to share what they chose of themselves, with people they trusted, without feeling over exposed or vulnerable. They also needed to be treated as equals in the relationship so that it was truly reciprocal. The lived experience of relationships then provides a primary context life-integration, self-transcendence and a movement towards ultimate life values for some people. As such, they are clearly spiritual in function, if we understand spirituality as, at least partly, a search for identity and wholeness.

Spirituality as the search for identity

Tied in with the theme of relationships was the on-going quest for identity which emerged as a theme for a number of participants. For them their search for meaning and purpose in life comprised a search for identity and personhood, a quest that worked itself out in some very interesting ways.

Self-determination

The search for identity for some encompassed and was manifest in a need for self-determination; the freedom to make choices about their lives which were congruent with their perception of its meaning, purpose and ultimate value:

> **Interviewer***: What do you think is meant by this phrase 'spiritual well-being'? What do you think that might mean Duncan? To be spiritual well, to experience spiritual well-being?*
>
> **Duncan***: I suppose I think what it means is helping me, it's helping me to know other people better and also understanding myself better. When I was much younger I didn't really know what to do in my life apart from being guided by other people.*

For Duncan self-determination was a part of spirituality and his ability to exercise it in his life - to make decisions based on his own inner guidance rather than relying on external advice - was a vital part of spiritual well-being.

Daisy also found that the ability to make good decisions about her life contributed to her sense of self:

> **Interviewer***: When do you feel most at peace with your self, do you think?*
> **Daisy***: Mmm I don't know really [laughs]. Quite difficult. I don't know. I think you like yourself when you've made a decision or you think 'Ok that's ok I've done that ok'*
> **Interviewer***: So when you do something well* (**Daisy***: yeah) you feel good?*
> **Daisy***: Made your own decision in the right way*

It is interesting to note the differing outcomes of Duncan and Daisy's respective self-determination. Duncan's self-determination brought him into community living. In contrast, however, Daisy's emerging self-determination manifest in a move from a community living situation to a more independent living situation supported by Camphill Houses. Developing independent living was an aspect of Daisy's search for self-identity and because it was the means of realising her marriage relationship, it held for her a spiritual significance.

Duncan and Daisy's situations illustrate that it is not the type of living situation per se that is the issue with regards to an individual finding spiritual fulfilment but rather the inherent meaning of that within their frame of reference. Thus, individuals can find spiritual well-being in quite different living situations as long as they are perceived as part of the outworking of their meaning and purpose in life.

The purpose of disability

The search for identity formation emerged in a different manner through Gordon's grappling with the question of his disability. Gordon addresses the question, 'Why am I disabled?':

Gordon*: It has come up yeah 'Why am I like this?'…Well how I solve it more than he [his friend] does, I know you haven't said it like that, but how I've coped with it is because, because of this NVQ –it's made me worth more. You're over that level which is not on that side and not on that side. You've come to a level, state of a human being that you want to be, you're happier with, even though it's come with its problems*

Interviewer*: So you've got something, a physical qualification that helps to bolster that sense of self, is that what you're saying*

Gordon*: Yeah self-worth*

Interviewer*: So that helps to answer that question that you do have purpose?*

Gordon*: Yeah. I do have a purpose from achieving this NVQ or this level of acceptance in the world you then feel you have more of a purpose…And not make my needs dominating my life. I wanted to better my life. So I did and I passed [NVQ] in 2000. That was the best thing I'd ever done in my life. You can't imagine how good that was –because I'd never done any, had any chance to do any exams in my, because of my life time was cut short through having fits*

Gaining a qualification has helped Gordon answer the existential questions 'Who am I?' and 'What is my purpose?' and therefore has a spiritual significance for him. It has enhanced his sense of self-worth through an achievement which is acknowledged in the world. It is tangible evidence for Gordon that despite his special needs he has the potential to achieve like others in the world. This helps him break free of the limitations that others seek to place on him and to be able to say 'I am more than my special

needs'. This alerts us the wide variety of things which hold spiritual significance for people.

Duncan had also faced the question 'Why me?' and had sought the answer through a different avenue:

Interviewer*: What then gives your life meaning and purpose Duncan would you say?*
Duncan*: Well the community, search for knowledge and probably also the search for self-knowledge. The self-knowledge bit is also I think to do with self-confidence*
Interviewer*: How do you search for self-knowledge?*
Duncan: *Well, with I suppose with my own em basically learn to live with my disability…And I, I don't, well I think that I wouldn't have had it any other way actually funny enough. I've grown used to my disability. I just feel that I'm differently able, not disabled*
Interviewer*: Has that taken you a long time to get to that position?*
Duncan*: Well it's taken me about 30, well I'm 59. It's taken me since childhood, I suppose*

Duncan found meaning and purpose in his life through a search for self-knowledge, knowledge and community i.e. connection with himself, God and others. This enables him to come to a place of self-acceptance where he seems to have found some measure of peace within himself and is able to view his disability in a positive light –'*differently able, not disabled'.*

Death, Dying and the Afterlife

All of the themes highlighted thus far came together in interesting ways as people raised issues surrounding death, dying and the afterlife. This was largely, but not solely, located within a religious context. Participants revealed a wide range of beliefs about such issues, some which emerged

from within traditional religious ideas and others which seemed to be an amalgamation of religion and anthroposophy. For example, the issue of heaven came up in various guises, but each person seemed to see this idea slightly differently. For Daisy, the idea of heaven seemed to work similar to a coping mechanism that helped her to deal with the loss of her parents:

Interviewer*: So what would your belief be then when somebody dies Daisy?*
Daisy*: You die and then you die you take all the things that you have done through life*
Interviewer*: And where then does a person go then after they die?*
Daisy*: They go to heaven don't they? [laughs].Somewhere I haven't experienced it yet so…*
Interviewer*: But you mentioned speaking to your mum and dad- is that because you believe that they're in heaven?*
Daisy*: It's the only way I can really understand it*
Interviewer: Have *you any experiences that make you believe that or is it just something that you believe Daisy?*
Daisy*: It's just something I believe yeah*

Daisy seemed to use the idea of heaven as a way of dealing with the separation from her parents caused by their deaths. Heaven is a place of reuniting; a place where she can grasp the continuing spatial existence of her parents and the on-going hope of being reunited with them in the future. Her belief does not emanate from any particular spiritual experience or formal religious tradition. Rather it is a belief that is certainly articulated in religious language but intended simply to relate a deep inner longing for hope of retaining some connection to her parents. That hope is for the future, but brings benefits in the present.

In contrast, Audrey's belief in the afterlife has been confirmed by experience. She has had an out of body/near death experience which has given her confidence that she knows what heaven and God are like:

Interviewer: And *what do you think God is like Audrey?*
Audrey*: When I was in Camphill I had, I think it was pneumonia. I was very ill. I nearly, I could see myself floating, just going like this*… [indicates rising upwards with hands] *So I know, I can experience what it's like up above… I experienced myself really rising up. So I know what it's like cause I could see the throne, I could see the angels and I could see things that, you know, I could experience what it's like up there…Well it was in heaven. It was the spiritual world. I can experience it*
Interviewer*: And do you still experience that at times Audrey?*
Audrey*: Oh yes time and again*
Interviewer*: Right. Is it a good experience?*
Audrey*: [pause] In a way it is because if I die that I could, I can experience it because I would see my dad, my mum, my aunts and uncles*
Interviewer*: So that experience makes you feel what?*
Audrey*: I would meet people that I know*
Interviewer*: And is that something you can look forward to then or...*
Audrey: *No it's not, you know*

For Audrey, her belief in the afterlife is confirmed by an experience that offers her reassurance of reconnecting with her family after death. Interestingly, however, this does not involve a current longing to be with them, perhaps indicating that her spiritual experience enhances rather than detracts from her connection to this physical world. Audrey also has had dreams since her dad died in which she is trying to cross a bridge to reach her father but in unable to. She comments on these dreams as follows:

Audrey*: I was talking that I could see a man crossing over a bridge and I couldn't get, I've twice had a dream about my dad walking over and I said to dad and I couldn't get across.*
Interviewer*: Right you couldn't get across..?*
Audrey*: To the other side. Because it's far…It's since my dad died you see I've had this experience*
Interviewer*: And this bridge dream that you have what do you think that's about?*
Audrey*: It's about life and it's about you know, I suppose it's everybody's life as well as my own life, and I think that's why dad wanted me to stay in Camphill that I would get support, you know.*

Audrey interprets her dream not only as a dream for herself, but as one with a universal significance, indicating that she perceives life after death as a universal truth.

Others such as Duncan were less clear about what they understood the afterlife to comprise of:

On and off I've thought…I have thought at one stage that death is the end, complete end Now I've feeling that there's more to it than that but how far do you go along the line. I think there is an afterlife but how to define it is actually very difficult now and I suppose that's the ultimate aim for me I suppose.

Duncan did not know what lay after death but had moved from a position of agnosticism to a belief that there was 'something more' – although as yet he did not know what that might be; but was still searching.

Reincarnation
As with the other communities in which we spent time, the idea of reincarnation was important for some of the Stourbridge residents. Doug for

example had had his understanding of the afterlife deeply shaped by a particular experience. He referred to spirituality as relating to things which are *'not on this earth….Like dying and come…coming to life….I don't know'* When asked to clarify what he meant by this, it became clear that Doug's idea of the afterlife emerged from a near death experience that he had as a child which continues to have a significant impact on his life:

Doug*: Because that's what happened to me when I was young*
Interviewer*: So tell me about that Doug*
Doug*: I died when I was 16, I nearly died when I was 16months*
Interviewer*: What happened then?*
Doug*: I had polio*
Interviewer*: Do you remember that time Doug?*
Doug*: My mum said I had the last anointment* [last rites] *and the doctors told me mum to turn off the machine … and then I came back*
Interviewer*: So you didn't die (***Doug***: No) when they'd expected you to? And do you have any memory of that yourself Doug? No, just what your mum has told you?*
Doug*: I supposed to look, funny enough I supposed to look like a friend of my mum's, one that she, my mum's friend little lad died and I supposed to look like, I suppose to look like him*
Interviewer*: Right. So has your mum said you looked like this other boy who had already died?*
Doug*: Yeah and my mum said something that we met and me mum told me that we met half way and then I came back down*

Whilst Doug's memory of this near death experience appears to be based on his mother's recollections and interpretation, it nonetheless seems to reassure him that a spiritual world exists beyond this physical world and that he has a place, perhaps even a unique place, in this world. His mother's identification of Doug with the appearance of the dead boy also raises some interesting issues. Whilst in the previous extract Doug did not formally make

the association, the issue of reincarnation emerged as an important theme in his life as it did with a number of participants:

Interviewer*: So what do you think happens when you die then Doug? What's your idea about that?*
Doug*: I think sometimes we do die and sometimes we do come back but…Because some people think I've been round, cause I feel better round here like some people say 'oh I've been round here before or lived round here before'*
Interviewer*: So when you say you feel better round here, do you mean you feel at home?*
Doug*: I feel at home somehow, that I have been round here before but it doesn't partly, what's the word, click in*
Interviewer*: So it's not things that you can put your finger on? It's just a feeling that…?*
Doug*: It's just a feeling that some places like, go to somewhere or you think, 'I've been here before' and then I know it, know it but in a different, I dunno, in a different way*
Interviewer*: Right not in the same way as just now? And is that good experiences to have or?*
Doug*: Sometimes but not, I just keep it into myself but I don't…*

Doug seems to be hinting at the possibility of belief in reincarnation but there appears to be some degree of uncertainty. Matt, on the other hand had a much more developed concept of reincarnation which was much more identifiable with the anthroposophical perspective:

Matt*: and I believe in life after death as well.*
Interviewer*: Right ok. Tell me a little bit about that Matt. What do you believe about life after death?*
Matt*: Well I believe you've got purpose something in this life. Like if you end it, like if you commit suicide you have, you still got to live your life*

again in the next life but it would be even worse

Matt expressed the idea that we have a purpose in life but if we fail to fulfil that purpose or renege on it through 'opting out' we will be faced with the same challenges in a future life, but in a more intense way:

Interviewer*: and then what is it you believe happens next then Matt after you die?*
Matt*: When you die it takes a while to come back…And you probably, if you like tea which I do, and cigarettes, that won't be available for you. There won't be any tea available for you cause your job's to work on this life, and smoked too many cigarettes in this life, that won't be available for you*
Interviewer*: Right, so what we do in this life [Matt laughs] has an effect on the next?*
Matt*: Yeah. So when I passed, when I go, whenever I go up to heaven or wherever I won't have any cigarettes and cups of tea, cause I've had too much in this life [laughs]*

In addition, Matt holds the view that there is a delay in reincarnation after death and that certain experiences in this life will determine experiences in the next. These beliefs, *inter alia,* appeared to free Matt from the fear of dying:

Interviewer*: When you said you weren't afraid of dying is it this idea of coming back again that you makes you not afraid or is it something else Matt?*
Matt*: A bit of both*
Interviewer*: Right ok. So what's the other thing that makes you not afraid?*
Matt*: Cause I know I've been here before*

Reincarnation thus provides Matt with a firm framework of beliefs that helps him to come to terms with his own mortality and open up the hope that there is more in his life than he sometimes feels there is. Similarly for Gordon, the idea of reincarnation provided a framework within which he could find meaning and purpose in his life, at least theoretically:

Gordon*: So you're like you're, you're virtually doing what Christ did 2000 years ago except we're not as perfect as Christ, so our spiritual being wasn't as perfect as Christ's. So we have to go on several journeys before our spiritual being is perfected*
Interviewer*: So does that mean we have several lives then Gordon?*
Gordon*: I believe you have several times in order to make that spiritual being absolutely perfect, as perfect as you can make it….It's a learning curve to perfect that spiritual being so that one day you don't' have to keep coming back to this earth*
Interviewer*: And when that is achieved, the spirit is where Gordon, the spiritual being?*
Gordon*: The spiritual world is where it should be, but permanent*
Interviewer*: So it stays in the spiritual world permanently?*
Gordon*: I would say so but I'm only guessing*

Gordon views each life as a unique learning experience for the spiritual being; a continuing process which goes on within each individual until 'perfection' is attained. Once this state has been achieved, there is no need for the spiritual to return to earth. But this belief was not simply for the future. It clearly had an impact on Gordon's day-to-day life and may well have underpinned the types of altruistic attitudes we outlined previously in this report. However, its main impact seems to be in enabling Gordon to cope with the idea of death: '*I think it makes you, it makes you know how to deal with others when people die better.'*

To sum up, the general consensus was that most believed that this life isn't

all that there is; that there is 'something more.' Precisely how that was defined and conceptualised varied in rich and interesting ways.

Practices supporting spirituality and spiritual well-being

Having explored some of the basic concepts and ideas that made up the spiritual worldview of participants, it will be helpful now to spend some time looking at the practices that people used to develop and sustain their spirituality and their sense of spiritual well-being. As was the case for the other communities, these practices intermingle the religious and the not religious in a way that reveals something of the depth and richness of people's spiritual lives. Some of these practices were well formulated in people's experiences, with the symbols, rituals and practices of religion and of the community offering clear frameworks and perspectives within which people created space for the development of their spiritual well-being. The main practices identified were as follows: church going, bible study groups, prayer and celebrating festivals

Church attendance

The most common form of religious practice engaged in by participants was church attendance. One resident, Lillian, had re-established a strong connection with the Church of England since coming to Stourbridge and this renewed relationship formed an important part of her spiritual and social life. In contrast, when in Botton she had been a relative non-attender, feeling ill at ease with the Christian community service 'on-site' and with limited access to the Church of England in the local community:

Lillian*: I missed actually going to church* [when I stayed in Botton] *because they didn't have a church…,it was in Danby but you had to walk about 5 miles.*

Interviewer*: Was that a Church of England?*

Lillian*: Church of England yeah. I did sometimes go to a church there* [Botton Christian Community] *but you know I went at Christmas or if it was a special occasion or something you know…*
Interviewer*: The Christian community church service you didn't go there?*
Lillian*: I found it a little bit hard to follow it.*
Interviewer*: Because it was different?*
Lillian*: Different yeah and I thought, I was used to the Church of England*

Lillian's point is an important one that echoes that of some of the Botton residents. Non-attendance at worship should not necessarily be taken as lack of desire to attend and participate. It may be that what is readily available does not suit the particular needs of the individual.

Lillian had engaged in a movement towards the church during her time at Stourbridge, but others had different experiences. Daisy had been involved in the Christian Community as server in her previous Camphill community, but since coming to Stourbridge had given that up and has not replaced it with any other regular church attendance:

Daisy*: Yeah I used to serve in the Act of Consecration – both David [her husband] and I did for a while.*
Interviewer*: So that was in the Christian Community church? (***Daisy***:mmm) But you're not involved in the Christian Community here?*
Daisy*: No, I was for a while but then we gave it up as well [laughs]*
Interviewer*: Why was that Daisy do you think?*
Daisy*: I found I found it a bit peculiar quite honestly! [laughs]*
Interviewer*: Can you say in what way you found it peculiar Daisy?*
Daisy*: Well I found it, they don't sing, they sing, they don't sing hymns like in you know in the Church of England. I found that a bit strange [laughs]. Well everybody's different of course. Yeah I found it quite, a bit funny [laughs]*

Interviewer*: Funny because there was no hymn singing? Any thing else that's different about the service?*
Daisy*: They so more serious isn't it? You can't have, in our church you at least can have a laugh afterwards when you can be with people after the service, getting the coffee and you can chat to other people here*
Interviewer*: So the social aspect was missing for you?*
Daisy*: Yes, I found it missing*

Daisy's experiencing of the Christian Community church seems to centre on her lack of understanding of the symbolism and ritual involved and the fact that it had not been effectively explained to her. This combined with a lack of the familiar elements of a Church of England service (e.g. hymns), and also a perceived seriousness and lack of social contact seemed to induce a feeling of inferiority and disconnection which has led to her being disaffected with this particular way of doing church. Again, this resonates with the experiences of some Botton residents with regards the Christian Community church.

Most participants attended church at some time during the year. However, only one participant attended the Christian Community church in Stourbridge, and then only at special events such as Christmas and Easter. The rest, even those with a long history in Camphill, chose mainly to attend the churches of their upbringing: Church of England, Roman Catholic, and Quaker. When identifying why church attendance was an important means of expressing their spirituality, the significant factors highlighted were:

- A peaceful atmosphere
- A sense of connectedness to the form of worship via a mode of liturgy which was familiar and understandable
- The impact of the music
- The sacrament of communion
- A sense of relationship and community.

A peaceful atmosphere

Interviewer*: What is it particularly about the Church that's important for you Felicity?*

Felicity*: It's just a nice quiet place to be…I go and…people there are friendly*

Interviewer*: Why do you go to church, to St Thomas's Doug?*

Doug*: I can think of, I can think of people who have died or I can just think of people and stuff*

Interviewer*: And what do you particularly enjoy about the [Quaker] meeting Duncan that makes you have it as part of your life?*

Duncan*: Well I learned to start with saying that I actually found the Anglican service which I have attended in the past very, very difficult…,basically because it's too busy. I mean not enough time for contemplating, contemplations and I always really enjoy the silence*

A sense of connectedness to the form of worship via a mode of liturgy which was familiar and understandable

Interviewer*: What else do you like about the service?*

Lillian*: Well I can understand it. You see it's the one I've been brought up in, you see, Church of England. Cause I was christened the Church of England you see…I don't know I just all, understand it a lot more than the Christian Community.*

Gordon*: It's not over powering. It's, it's a basic service. It's not too long, it gets to the point you know and that's what I like about it –and it's friendly as well…And it's done with meaning you know and and the sermons are done with some thought. …He* [the vicar] *talks about worldly topics, he talks about what's happening now. What's happened this week, what, how can Stourbridge do that. So even although it's a small town how can Stourbridge interact and make that little piece of the world better*

The impact of the music

Lillian*: I also enjoy the choir, they've got a very nice choir. Well lots of our people*[Camphill Houses residents] *go there. They like it and they like the choir…*

Interviewer*: And what does that do the singing?*

Lillian*: The choir –it sort of makes me feel a lot restful their singing…*

Felicity*: I guess the music is lovely…got this very good organist and …yes the music teacher there…and a lovely choir…um…and I like classical music Yeah, all that sort of music…*

Interviewer*: So how does the music affect you, Felicity, how does that make you feel?*

Felicity*: It varies, sometimes…it sort of makes me cry because it's so lovely and other times it doesn't really make me cry-it's just nice…*

Doug*: Some of the music, some of the songs seems to be happy or something*

It was clear from participant's responses that a peaceful atmosphere combined with familiar proceedings enables people to relax and to engage with what is going on with some degree of understanding. This leads to a sense of connectedness with the form of the worship, which then provides a context for the development of a sense of inclusion and acceptance.

The sacrament of communion

Again, in line with Botton residents, one of the most important elements of the service for a number of people was participation in communion. It was this particular symbolic element of the proceedings that helped people to feel special, accepted and at peace within themselves:

Interviewer*: What is it about the communion, Felicity, that…*

Felicity*: It just brings me closer to Jesus I think, thinking ok, He's there, and He's breaking the bread and giving me it out Mmm…yeah when He's says 'it's…for you' I'm thinking 'Ok, this is my bit'…*

Doug's experience is similar:

Interviewer*: What parts are there about the service that make you want to go to church?*
Doug*: Bread and the wine*
Interviewer*: So that's the communion part?*
Doug*: It's the communion*
Interviewer*: Is that the most important part for you then?*
Doug: *Yes*
Interviewer*: Do you know why that's important for you Doug? What is it about that?*
Doug*: I dunno but it just feels, it just feels… I know I like singing and all that but communion part feels better for me, I don't know*
Interviewer*: Right. So that, so something about the communion feels for you the most special part of the service?*
Doug*: Very, very special*
Interviewer*: Can you describe how it makes you feel when you take part in the communion?*
Doug*: Feels better, I dunno. I feel, I dunno what it is but I feel good for it*
Interviewer*: Right so after you've taken part you feel better about yourself?*
Doug*: Yeah*
Interviewer*: You feel good?*
Doug*: I feel very good.*

Communion was perceived to be an element of the worship which was both tangible and intangible. Through the taking of the bread and the wine Doug and Felicity could, in a sense, encounter Jesus in a quite physical way. And yet this encounter is intangible and, as Doug clearly points out, inexpressible in language. But for both, participation in the ritual of this sacrament leads to feelings of spiritual well-being and a sense of peaceful self-affirmation.

Gordon's experience is similar to Doug and Felicity's. For him communion is a powerful space within which he can relate to God in a way that he does not at other times:

I think it [communion] *helps you to relate to God in a more, in a, in a good way. It's not just "it's a food that you're eating", that you feel in compassion with God, even although sometimes my thoughts are not exactly brill but because a vicar explained to me before, the devil does have some impact into that. Being a Christian he tries to make you think stuff that's rubbish. There's forces, a bad, not a good force that comes into that –do you understand what I mean? –there's not a good force.*

As we have seen previously, engaging in the practice of communion enables Gordon to become aware that his imperfections are totally acceptable to God. In communion he realises that God accepts him as he is. It is the place where the interconnectedness of the inner and the outer life become apparent, where there is awareness and yet also resolution of the tension between striving for perfection within our imperfect human frame and our connectedness to God.

<u>A sense of relationship and community</u>

The social aspect, the friendliness of the other members of the congregation, provided a positive experience of acceptance, integration and interaction with wider society:

Lillian*: I did not go for a little while when I had my bad leg cause I was out of action… but Carol was very good and she always brought back the church paper and prayed for me and said lots of people missed you and send lots of love…*

Interviewer*: So what is it that you like about the church Lillian?*

Lillian*: Well I find here they're very very nice people. Nice to be with. Just down the road there, just down there and they're nice people.*
Interviewer*: So are the people quite friendly there?*
Lillian*: Oh yeah they're lovely people very nice people indeed*

Lillian feels she has a place in the church community and that they miss her when she's not there –*she matters.*

The influence of the church did not simply relate to Sunday morning services. Its influence spread out throughout the person's week as they tried to live out their spirituality by carrying into daily life that which had been significant for them in the worship service:

Felicity*: Probably that I'm going to go out there and be loving towards people and…yes, that anything said in the sermon…to try and yeah bring that out… share it a bit.... Also sometimes when the music sticks in my head, or the hymns I'm kind of thinking ok, that was a few days ago, but yeah it's a very special thing to have in my life, I think*
Holly*: If you go to church and you relate to it, it can help you through the week. I know it does me anyway. Well sometimes it does and sometimes it doesn't just depending on the day or whatever and the mood that I'm in. Anyway that it's important*

Church going then was clearly an important and continuing aspect contributing to people's spiritual well-being.

Bible study groups
The church setting also provided opportunities for other types of interaction with members of the wider community in bible study groups. For a number this was important both for its social aspect – being invited into the homes of others – and for the opportunity to learn and understand more about their faith:

Felicity*: I can contribute a bit but it's nice just listening to what other people have to say and there's about 6 or 7 of us and yeah, it's a nice social thing to do um…yeah and makes me sort of learn a bit more I guess about the Bible…*
Interviewer*: And is that something that is important to you (**Felicity***: yes, yes) In what ways do you feel that's important for you?*
Felicity*: Well it's just helping me be more of a Christian and…learn something new in life really*

It was interesting that Lillian feels more at home in the church bible study group and contributes to a greater extent than in the bible evenings within Camphill:

Lillian*: I don't know. Well in bible evening, I sometimes, I didn't say a lot. At bible evening I keep, well, quiet*
Interviewer*: Why is that?*
Lillian*: Sometimes probably I can't think of a lot to say, you know*
Interviewer*: And do you find it easier in this other group?*
Lillian*: Yes I do. Yes I do say something, yeah*

Here again, as with the form of worship, some measure of understanding helps to create a sense of inclusion.

Bible evening
Bible evening was highlighted as one of the spiritual practices within Camphill Houses. It seemed somewhat peripheral to most and not something to which they felt any stronger a connection than the church study groups. As previously highlighted at Botton, the frequency, form and the necessity to attend bible evening had changed over the years. Attendance was no longer obligatory and it does not occur every week. In addition, there is variation within the community as to how it is practiced. These changes and freedoms

were generally viewed as a positive development although some disadvantages were also highlighted:

Holly*: It wasn't a choice And now it's basically if you want to or you're invited or we're not having one. You see coming from the 1980's up into the year 2000 it's changed. Things have changed in Camphill Houses and in the outer world*
Interviewer*: And do you think that's been a positive change for spirituality or spiritual well-being?*
Holly*: I think it's a bit of both. We've grown up, we're coming up becoming older we're becoming more sense, well some people are becoming more sensible yeah basically*

Holly highlights the way that people are empowered when they can make their own choices but also hints that this needs to be linked with an appropriate degree of maturity.

One disadvantage of the changing practice with regards bible evening was the perception expressed by Gordon that 'newcomers' no longer get the initial 'grounding' on the spiritual aspects of life, which he feels is necessary for them to appreciate themselves as valued human beings, not limited by their special needs i.e. to see themselves as spiritual beings with a purpose, meaning in life:

there are things like bible evenings which we used to have a lot and festivals which I feel that helps people, gives people the opportunity to have an understanding of spiritual well-being and to overcome the feeling of there's more to you than just having special needs

Thus, although having bible evening less frequently was seen as liberating, there was also a feeling that perhaps something had been lost. Without the obligation, individuals are now required to take responsibility for carving out

their own spiritual practices, and some may not yet be able to do so effectively. Gordon reflects on his own spirituality here, now much more individualised (although he perceives it as less religious) and less connected to the spiritual practices of Camphill:

It used to happen every Saturday when I came here but then you felt that you had no Saturday to go out You had to keep arranging it with these people round the Bible evenings and that could be very awkward. Not that I, I used to love the Bible evenings, and I feel I've become less religious, not unreligious but a little bit less you know connected

For some, it was the interaction with others that took place at bible evening that was as important as the content:

Interviewer*: What is it's* [bible evening] *significance for you and what happens there?*
Duncan*: We we have a set bible reading usually on a Saturday evening where we read read a passage from the bible and try discussing it. That's if we have the time to. Try to interpret it rather and also in a way, it's interaction with people*

That the bible discussion may be primarily for some a vehicle for connection with others rather than an end in its own right needs to be recognised. This has consequences for Camphill with regard to any form of review of its practice. Practices may have different meaning/value/purpose for different people and there is a need to recognise what core needs these might be meeting, especially with regard to any contemplated changes. When practices are changed or abandoned the question of 'What purpose did they serve?' should first be explored with the aim of discerning whether that purpose is still relevant and if so how it might be fulfilled in a more appropriate way.

Prayer

Most of the participants acknowledged that they engaged in prayer as a spiritual practice. Some prayed regularly, some infrequently, and some used to pray but did not do so any more. For Daisy, prayer centred on a particular desire:

Interviewer*: Is prayer something that's ever part of your life Daisy?*
Daisy*: Mm sometimes yeah I pray quite a lot that I wish my parents were here. Sometimes I wish they were here to see me grow up because they didn't really see me grow up.*

In line with this desire Daisy who told us that she prays to her parents rather than to God or a higher power:

Interviewer*: When you pray are you praying to them [*her parents*] or are you praying to somebody else Daisy?*
Daisy*: Praying to them really*
Interviewer*: Is it a way of trying to keep in touch with them or…?*
Daisy*: It's the way I remember them really, isn't it? When they're not here, you don't remember them. Well sometimes you do but sometimes you don't. I mean my mum, my parents death really affected me quite a lot. I never could really get over it but I got over it eventually. I thought I'd never manage it but I did.*

Praying to her parents is a means of keeping their memory alive. Such communication with the dead should not be misunderstood as pathological or even a movement towards spiritualism. Recent thinking on grieving has indicated that conversing with dead lost ones is a very common occurrence and an important aspect of healthy grieving (Walter 1996). Other studies have highlighted that this is a common experience for people with special needs (Swinton & Powrie 2004). Since, as we have seen, Daisy's spirituality appears to revolve around human relationships rather than any relationship

with a 'higher power', it is perfectly in keeping that her parents are the ones to whom she addresses her prayers.

All other participants who prayed addressed their prayer to God:

He's invisible. He listens to you and when you pray to God you feel that, you feel that something's listening to you in the room – but whether that's your imagination that you like to think that someone's listening to you...

For some prayer was a habit rooted in childhood:

Interviewer*: Prayer is that something that's important to you?*
Lillian*: Yes*
Interviewer*: Do you pray Lillian?*
Lillian*: Yes I do yes. Well I was brought up to say my prayers of course*
Interviewer*: And when you're praying what sort of things do you pray about?*
Lillian*: I always pray for my parents and the world, what's happening in the world at the moment those sorts of things.*

For Felicity, 'prayer' was perceived of as set prayers but in practice also clearly encompassed what she described as 'talking in her head':

Interviewer*: And how do you find that you kind of get in touch with that kind of help from Him?*
Felicity*: Erm, well I suppose I talk to Him in my head at bit. I don't really pray a lot, which I always think, oh I should do…but not one for praying, saying my prayer's every morning or every night. I might have done as a child, I can't remember that far, no strong memory*

Similarly for Doug thinking and praying merged together in a seamless conversation:

Interviewer*: Where would you pray normally?*
Doug*: In church*
Interviewer*: In church. Would you pray anywhere other than in church?*
Doug*: Sometimes in the garden… I'm not only thinking in the garden but I'm praying at the same time*

Duncan viewed prayer more as contemplation, as creating the space for the inner voice (the voice of the spirit), to speak. In this sense, prayer was a creative enterprise and one which needed time and space:

Duncan: *Well I've always found prayer difficult. I'm not sure I know prayer. I tend, I tend to go into contemplate which is not easy, not a very easy task.*
Interviewer*: So tell me a little bit about contemplation, Duncan. What does that involve then?*
Duncan*: Contemplation for me just requires a certain degree of silence so I can make make the opening. And also to quieten my brain down a bit*
Interviewer*: So stopping some of you own thoughts?*
Duncan*: Yes*
Interviewer*: And in that opening if you manage to create that opening, what can come in that opening, Duncan, in your experience?*
Duncan*: Well I suppose, well listening to others and I suppose trying to put a perspective, a perspective on what's going on in life rather than trying to go full out on your own objective*

In this actively created silence, a change of perspective can emerge and self-objectives are modified in the light of this listening experience. It is significant that 'making the opening' is viewed as a creative process that needs to be actively pursued; an act of will designed to create the space and then to allow what come into that space to come to fruition. It is into this space that the spirit comes. Duncan perceives that we actively stop the spirit

in our lives by keeping busy; by avoiding the voice of the spirit. This highlights the needs for space and silence for the 'still, small voice' to be heard.

Most participants prayed during times of trouble or when needing support - asking for help:

Interviewer*: Do you ever pray or…?*
Tim*: I do yeah*
Interviewer*: When would you tend to pray?*
Tim*: Mostly when I'm em when something's troubling me*

Some kept prayer for the really difficult times, preferring to try to solve their problems on their own and to turn to prayer only when all else had failed:

I don't pray hardly at all really but that's beside the point. I do pray from time to time. When life is getting me down. I don't do it every day as a necessity but I don't think I'm the only one that does that…, I've done it sometimes when life is really getting me down. Life has really got to kick me a bit before I actually start praying. Because I think that's somehow, I'm a very determined person.

Most experienced that their prayers were answered - some by a palpable presence, others by a sense of inner peace, strength, support and increased confidence in their decisions:

Doug*: It's when things are not going right or something and I just need I just pray sometimes and then just it help, it sometimes helps- like there's something behind me*
Interviewer*: And you feel that your prayers are answered?*
Doug*: Sometimes they're answered straight away*
Interviewer*: And how does that answer come to you?*

Doug*: Feel on my back I can feel it*
Interviewer*: A sort of feeling of somebody…?*
Doug*: Somebody there*
Interviewer*: And is that a good feeling? Yeah? [Doug nods]*

Doug perceived that he receives a personal, experiential answer to his prayers, but not always. This does not seem to make him doubt the validity of the experience and shows an ability to hold doubt and certainty together - potentially a mark of spiritual well-being. Matt also experiences his prayers being answered by an inner feeling:

Interviewer: *Right ok and do you find that you feel you get the help?*
Matt*: Yes I do*
Interviewer*: How does that tend to come then Matt? How do you experience that?*
Matt*: It just feels, it just gets better*
Interviewer*: Ok so after you've prayed you get a feeling of?*
Matt*: Relief.*
Interviewer*: A bit of relief? (**Matt**:Yes) Right ok and that feeling you think for you had come from God? Is that…*
Matt*: Yeah*

Gordon finds prayer a means of re-centring when things are out of control; a means of finding himself again:

I think prayer, I feel you , I feel you em I think prayer helps you to relax, to get a grip of yourself , I've gone 'off' several times over this year –I've gone to see my priest, my vicar and he's helped me. We've had sessions going over what's happening in life and we would pray about these things and I think prayer helps to to get to grip with life…I think the prayer adds a bit of strength, pulling yourself together.

This 'vertical' relationship with God, with some power greater than themselves, was clearly important for people. For Felicity, it helped build her self-confidence and enabled her to better function in life, supplementing her 'horizontal' relationships with her husband and friends:

Interviewer*: And how does that help then come to you, do you feel, when you…after you've sort of talked to God or Jesus about these worries or things, how then do you feel that God helps you with that?*
Felicity*: I think I feel a bit more confident…doing…going ahead with talking to people or…doing something*
Interviewer*: So is it a kind of inner feeling that you have*
Felicity*: Yes A more positive, yeah like, I feel more positive…erm…. and thinking it is the right thing to do*
Interviewer*: So that's sort of reassurance that comes to you (***Felicity***: yeah)*
Felicity*: Yeah I'm not a very positive person…I lack confidence, although it is coming thanks to my husband and friends, you know…*
Interviewer*: So in building up that confidence people are important…(***Felicity***: Very) also this relationship with, with God, is that important too?*
Felicity*: Yes, yes it is*

The foregoing illustrates the range of individual perceptions and experiences of prayer. Prayer was variously seen as a source of connection with something outside of the self, as a source of help, support and comfort. It was an important element in a number of the participant's lives. The way it was conceptualised and carried out was individualised, as was the experience of how prayers were answered. People seemed to make their own connection in the way and at the times that suited them best and did not conform to any outward regimen or routine.

Festivals

Celebration of the seasonal and Christian festivals was identified by some as a spiritual practice within Camphill Houses, but how they acted as an expression of spirituality seemed to vary between individuals. Some seemed to enjoy the opportunity they gave for creative expression, others emphasised the importance of the shared community experience while for others the festivals served to heighten their general awareness of a spiritual dimension to life. The key significance seemed to centre on connecting with others and, for some, God, through shared experience:

Lillian*: Well we celebrate them more in the community*
Interviewer*: So everybody together?*
Lillian*: Yeah*
Interviewer*: And is that something you like doing?*
Lillian: *Yeah like St John's is celebrated all together and Michaelmas.*
Interviewer*: What do you think's important about the festivals then?*
Doug*: It's just you, being there, being there whatever, in the festival*
Interviewer*: So it's taking part that's important?*
Doug*: Taking part and see what and then when you finished it stand back and say 'I've done that'*
Interviewer*: And how does that feel when you stand back*
Doug*: Good*

While the festivals were for some a source of inclusion, where community members got together and also where those from the outside community were invited to join in, there was recognition that, by their very nature - symbolism, set songs, plays - they could also act as an excluding element for those unfamiliar with them e.g. new residents with no history of Camphill. It was acknowledged that that could be difficult:

Lillian*: We do invite people, friends from outside to come sometimes and there's quite a few of the residents here who are from outside and they*

haven't lived in another Camphill place and they find it hard
Interviewer*: How do they find it hard Lillian do you think?*
Lillian*: Well they've never done all that sort of thing before you see, lots of us who have celebrated the festivals you see in our life.*

A number who had a long association with Camphill enjoyed the festivals and expressed that they would miss them if they were not celebrated. The festivals for them perhaps served as a link between their past and present. However, they also recognised that things were changing, that the festivals were perhaps a thing of the past – or at any rate in the format that those with a history in Camphill recognised and were comfortable with:

Lillian*: But we don't I find we don't celebrate them as much as we used to actually and I think it's because we've all got people that are a bit more sort of independent now and they want to do their sort of own thing.*
Interviewer*: Do you think that's a good thing or not so good?*
Lillian*: I think it's nice actually that we do get together sometimes and join and do the festivals*

This change in practice was perceived to be due to more individualisation and independence within the community, meaning that to some extent people's wish to participate in a common expression of spirituality has been lost. The festivals had served as a source of connection. If the demand for this is declining it may well be that there is a need to find other practices which meet the same end. A number of people seemed to seek fill this gap by going elsewhere and appeared just as likely to attend festivals of Advent, Christmas, Easter in the local churches as the celebrations in Camphill Houses.

Spirituality and work

Work was another significant practice that people specifically designated as spiritual. Although most individuals said work was an important aspect of their life, a number were searching to find meaningful work and some were not strongly identified with their current work, gaining little sense of fulfilment from it. There were some, however, for whom their current work was seen explicitly as an expression of spirituality and significant for their spiritual well-being:

Duncan*: Yes in a sense that's where the spirituality comes in really. Working outside with natural things…I just enjoy working with plants*
Interviewer*: You say that's where the spirituality comes in, in what way for you Duncan do you experience that then when you're outside and working with plants and nature?*
Duncan*: Well I think it comes, this may sound old fashioned, but I actually do believe in the old biblical notion of stewardship. I think that's where that comes from…Well we were, man was given by God so I believe em dominion and stewardship of the world- that's the animals and plants- and I'm probably also learn to make the planet a better place for most people I suppose. In what way I'm not sure*
Interviewer*: So when you're working in the garden with the plants how does that help you feel? What kind of feelings come up for you?*
Duncan*: Well apart from I suppose fulfilment*

Work served for Duncan a higher purpose in line with his belief framework that humans are stewards of the earth's resources. In his work, he therefore saw himself working in partnership with the divine. Work seen in this light gives Duncan a sense of fulfilment and serves a spiritual function. Work also held a spiritual significance for Tom. It was a part of his life where he experienced peace and was able to access something which nurtured his inner being. For Tom such positive feelings were unusual:

Interviewer*: What other things you know help to make life good for you?*
Tom*: Well just gardening. I need gardening*
Interviewer*: Do you like in the garden?*
Tom: *Yeah it's nice*
Interviewer*: What do you particularly like about that Tom?*
Tom*: It's being in the countryside*
Interviewer*: Is that something you like – being in the countryside?* [Tom nods]
Interviewer*: Why do you like that do you think?*
Tom*: Peaceful, away from people really*
Interviewer*: So when you're working in the garden can you, does it help you forget about problems and things like that?*
Tom*: Mhmm*

Like Duncan, the type of work was a vital element in its spiritual significance for Tom. Working with nature fulfilled a need in Tom for connectedness with something greater than himself in a way which fitted with his pagan religious framework. In a world where he often felt victimised and betrayed, work in the garden was a means by which he might be able to open up to the possibility of goodness in life.

For Holly too, work has a spiritual dimension both in its relational aspect - in developing the ability to get on with others - and also in its function of providing a source of meaning and purpose to life:

Interviewer*: Is it important that you get on with people that you work with to make your work enjoyable?*
Holly*: It is important. It's part of spirituality isn't it? It's part of a growing up process. If we didn't have work, where would we be? If we didn't have something to do during the day, where would we be? It all boils down to the same sort of thing doesn't it?*

Interviewer*: So what do you think your life would be like if you didn't have work then Holly?*
Holly*: A complete and empty void. You'd be, it would be completely empty.*
Interviewer*: So works something then that helps you have a sense of meaning and purpose in your life is it?*
Holly*: Yeah, exactly*

Work for Gordon also encompassed a spiritual dimension. We have already noted that Gordon saw his life unfolding within a spiritual context and that extended to the area of work. Further, a major focus of his 'project of life integration' was to transcend his disability through self-acceptance and acceptance by society. One avenue through which he sought to achieve this was work:

Interviewer*: Why is it important for you Gordon do you think to be able to work?*
Gordon*: Because I don't want to be seen needing, needing, my special needs being taking over. I come here to get on in my life to be able to have the same opportunities as my brother and sister*
Interviewer*: So you don't want to be defined by your special needs?*
Gordon*: No I don't. No that's the whole point of coming to Camphill Houses*
Interviewer*: And work is one way of overcoming that?*
Gordon*: Yeah. I don't want to be saying 'Oh he's in that centre or he's in that home'. I want to move on from that.*

For Gordon it is important that his special needs do not define who he is. Work is an important indicator of whether or not that is so in the eyes of society:

Interviewer*: So what for you has helped you to come to terms with [your special needs]…*
Gordon*: Going out to work and meeting other people then*
Interviewer*: So that's been a big positive for you?*
Gordon*: That has been a very positive side to my development in life. If I didn't have, if I hadn't had* [name of previous work place] *I don't think I would have and I've noticed the people in the work place are more positive to you*
Interviewer*: Right so being accepted by other people is that something that…*
Gordon*: Who are not Camphill, have been more positive for my development. And I think that's important for everybody because the work place don't know who you are properly, whereas these people* [Camphill co-workers] *do and they tend to smother it a little bit.*

Gordon feels in some ways that transcending his special needs has been helped by going out to work because people there are less aware of his shortcomings. For others, work seemed to relate to a similar wider sense of belonging and acceptance:

Interviewer*: Is it something about contributing* [through work] *as well that's important for you?*
Felicity*: Yes it is and like a sense of belonging rather than just not having anything to do.*
Interviewer*: And that sense of belonging for you, sense of belonging to, to what Felicity?*
Felicity*: Being like other people who are out at work…It is quite depressing thinking 'oh I can't work. I'm not as good as anyone else'*

Like Gordon, Felicity perceives that meaningful work can contribute to well-being and to a sense of self-worth. It can act as a counter to 'not being as

good as others', through allowing a sense of belonging and contribution to society.

Neither Gordon nor Felicity was doing work which truly met that need. Gordon was still searching for work in which he feels fulfilled. He grapples with the barriers that seem to be placed in his way, trying to view these as a learning experience rather than as set-backs. However, it is clear that because of the spiritual significance that Gordon places on work this created tension. Sadly work, an avenue by which Gordon sought to be 'the same as others', also served to emphasise his difference.

It was evident from what people told us that a number of other participants were also seeking work that was satisfying and fulfilling but finding this difficult to achieve and were currently engaged in activities which 'filled time' rather than 'fired their souls'. This was illustrated by Daisy, who wanted to work with children but could not find a suitable position:

Interviewer*: So how does it feel then to be working in the Cockleshell and the weavery at the moment is that...?*
Daisy*: It's ok. Can get you down a bit sometimes. Sometimes not all the time. I just do it cause it's something to do rather than sitting at home doing nothing [laughs]*

It was clear that for work to be a spirituality significant element in people's lives they needed to experience a connection to it at an inner level, to perceive that it enabled them the express their meaning and purpose in life, to be in some sense an expression of 'who they are'.

To sum up, work, training courses and other vocational activities were important potential avenues for expressing spirituality and contributed to spiritual well-being. They offered opportunities to connect to self, others and the wider society. They could be a source of fulfilment, satisfaction and

achievement, contributing to self-acceptance, self-worth and self-confidence. They could also be a means of expressing self-determination and furthering independence. On a relational level, they could act against insularity and isolation, providing opportunities for socialising with varied groups of people. Through them, individuals sought to contribute and belong to society, to be seen as 'the same as', and to be connected to the 'bigger picture'. Work in particular was symbolic of acceptance by society.

Filling time with 'vocational' activities whether work, college or otherwise did not, however, guarantee fulfilment of this potential for a spiritual dimension. This seemed partly dependent on whether individuals experiences of work, training courses and other 'vocational' activities linked into their inner aspirations and hopes – what they wanted to *be* rather than merely something to do. It was also linked to the perception of the work as 'meaningful' and 'purposeful'. Work that was 'created' not out of necessity for the work itself but out of the necessity to create something for people to do, appeared not to meet these important criteria - and appeared to be unfulfilling. Work could therefore run counter to an individual's spirituality and spiritual well-being. It was clear that in the way the participants spoke about these areas of their lives that they were aware of this although not always able to articulate it.

Community life as an expression of spirituality

The final aspect that we want to highlight briefly in relation to the people with special needs with whom we spent time in Stourbridge is the significance of community life. For most of the participants, community living appeared to be the backdrop against which they lived and worked out their spirituality rather than an expression of it per se. However, for Duncan community living, as he experienced it in Camphill Houses, *was* important as an expression of his spirituality:

Interviewer: *For you then is a sort of spiritual aspect important in you life?*

Duncan*: Yes Well before I joined the Quakers and here [*Camphill Houses*] I was very deeply agnostic. I had a belief but I wasn't sure what I was believing in. And I was actually beginning to feel very very empty inside…*

Interviewer*: You also mentioned that you felt that God came, was involved with you through the Camphill community – can you say a wee bit more about that, how…?*

Duncan*: I think that comes through the original ethos as laid down by Karl König and Steiner and also I suppose and care*

Interviewer*: So what do you understand that ethos to be?*

Duncan*: Well it's a general, I suppose, general it's to do with caring for people in a holistic way rather than doing things in em dealing with the economic bits of life separately from the others and don't just separate it, separate things artificially. That's basically what I've understood of it*

Interviewer*: So what might that mean to care for someone in a holistic way Duncan?*

Duncan*: Well not just to care for them in the materialistic way but caring them through I suppose a Christian or spiritual type ethical process*

Interviewer*: Can you tell me how do you see that working out in practice in the Camphill Houses here? Have you seen that or experienced it here?*

Duncan*: [pause] What I've experienced is that the co-workers tend to give enough of their time helping the residents with things like benefits and things and also and they actually really do care for us and we care for them back at least that's what I have felt... And the idea with Camphill generally is the feeling of community and actually don't really find feeling of community very much these days elsewhere because everybody is after their own goals which I think is wrong because we are a social animal and we need to be interreacting with other people, I mean in a positive way rather than in a negative way*

Through the Camphill Houses community, Duncan experienced God as a living presence in his life, not in some mystical way, but in the practical outworking of a mutual caring attitude between individuals. Its ideals and values resonated with those held by Duncan.

While Duncan's view of the spiritual significance of community living was unique amongst the participants, others did indicate that certain elements of community living were supportive of their spiritual well-being.

Conclusion

In concluding this section, we should note that community living per se did not seem to be the means by which most participants sought expression of their spirituality. The community appeared to be more of a backdrop, something which enabled people to work towards their next step in life, or which suited their current stage in life. Its main purpose seemed to be that of support, aimed largely at facilitating a process of individualisation. Many did not seem particularly inspired by or involved in community life. This may have been due to the fact that some of the residents seemed strongly engaged in their own life journey, which for many involved a process of self-discovery and self-determination, and thus appeared to have little to invest in community living beyond the basics

Part 3: Thematic Reflections on the Spirituality of Camphill Houses Co-workers

Spirituality: What is it?

'One is in tune or at least trying to be in tune with the intentions that are greater than than what one can experience just in you know the physical sense of the world'

The Stourbridge co-workers general views on the nature of spirituality were very similar to those expressed within the other communities. In line with the other communities, participants voiced an explicit awareness of a non-physical dimension to life which they referred to as 'the spiritual'. Their own life and the lives of those around them were perceived as unfolding within this spiritual context. Precisely how that spiritual context was understood and constructed varied between individuals and appeared to some extent to be influenced by people's upbringing and previous religious experiences. All of our participants explicitly expressed that spirituality was a significant dimension of their lives. The general consensus was that spirituality is:

- Indivisible from life:

Interviewer*: How important is a spiritual aspect to life for you as an individual where you are just now?*
Ben*:Yeah I think I can't separate it basically because [laughs] I mean with me I feel like the feeling is so strong in my life so I just, I can't really separate it although I can separate it but it's very difficult So ..*
Interviewer*: Can you say a little bit more about that then?*
Ben*: I think any encounter in my life I always examine it from few point of view and then it's the spiritual in a way always come into account, so something that always exists*

- A reality/A fact of life:

Ian*: Well you could put the question the other way and ask about the physical world. It's not only essential it's there. It's how you relate to it, where you meet it but it's there. It's [spirituality] more than essential, it's part of reality-for me, of course.*

- The motivating force in their lives:

Esther*: For me the spirit isn't so so disconnected with life. In fact I think probably if I would describe my direction and my raison d'être you might say em it would it would need to create situations where the spirit is manifest in practical everyday daily life.*

- The source of meaning in life:

Guy: *For me spirituality is the source. It's cultivating, enabling me to have a meaningful life.*

Spirituality was perceived as a universal reality, inherent in all our lives whether we are aware of it or not, although how individuals chose to relate to this dimension of life was recognised as individualised. People perceived that it had brought them to where they were currently in their life and it continued to influence the way in which they sought to live out their lives.

Spirituality was thus held to have a practical significance in daily life. For some this emerged as a strong theme of service and selflessness whereas for others the emphasis was more on their personal, experiential spiritual development. For yet others there was identification with an intellectual approach, playing with the paradoxes and contradictions inherent in spirituality. Some were still searching to find certainty with respect to their own spiritual beliefs and were weighing concepts - including Camphill's

philosophy - against their own experiences. All were engaged in what could be described as a spiritual path in the sense described earlier in this report.

All participants expressed a belief that the physical and the spiritual were distinct but yet interconnected, although there were different concepts as to their relationship. Scott saw them as running in parallel*:*

The spirit world and the material world, the two they run in parallel together, they brush against each other… I think it is two worlds but it's like the yoke and the white is, it's physical material surrounded by the spirit and held by the spirit

In contrast, others saw them as more of a unity; indivisible, all is one:

Esther*: because it's not a spiritual world and a physical world it's kind of all one if you see what I mean*
Guy*: Spirituality I think that's a term that's been often misused. When I think of the word spirit, I can maybe connect with that better and understand it a little bit better. I think every physical form has a spiritual, non-physical origin. Take this chair, the form would have been in a carpenters mind let's say so one of the simplest object here this has, this was once upon a time unphysical substance and it has been created to be a physical form. And it's quite clear that these things aren't random. And if a chair's creation isn't random then I believe every physical form has an innate wisdom and a need. It's an expression of the non-physical, of the spiritual. So every life form is expressing, whether it's a slug or a human, they're each expressing the kaleidoscope of the vocabulary of the cosmos in a way and every life form or every plant has a meaning, has a task, has a gift by just being and doing what it's got to do*

For Guy the physical is an expression of the spiritual. Inherent here is the idea of the spirit as the force of creation. As such, the physical expresses the

spiritual, both by being and doing, and thus all things are perceived as having a meaning and task.

All of this is very much in line with the types of experiences described thus far in previous sections of this report. However, when we began to discuss some of the particularities of spirituality, interesting new dimensions began to appear.

Spirituality and religion

Issues of language

Whilst people clearly separated spirituality from religion, there was a general sense in which Camphill was perceived as a Christian community (Christianity as interpreted by Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy), although this appeared to create some degree of tension within the community:

Ian: *And I think it has to be said that we are a Christian, we are basically a Christian community. Our fundamentals are based upon the teachings of Christ. Now maybe that won't be so in fifty years time but I think at the moment it is. So the Christian path is very important*
Interviewer*: And by the Christian path what would you mean by that?*
Ian*: Aspiring to be Christ [laughs]…Well our guiding vision statement refers to the Christian path as elucidated by Rudolf Steiner. That's what our guiding vision statement says and yes I think that probably is important*
Interviewer*: So it's Christianity as interpreted by anthroposophy then?*
Helen: *Mmm*
Ian*: Yes which is a sort of, well I hate to use the word but I mean Steiner certainly uses it, it's a sort of mystical Christianity but nonetheless Christian, very Christian and Christ is the centre of the, of the picture and the gift that He gave to us…And I mean it's Christianity as we understand it is, it's not exclusive, it's totally inclusive. It doesn't exclude anyone*

Ian considers that the ethos of the Camphill Houses community is essentially Christian, with the teachings of Christ at its core. The Christianity to which Ian refers is that as expressed through anthroposophy and is perceived by him to be inclusive. However, while the concept may be inclusive, the religious connotations of the language used to convey the concept clearly was an excluding factor for some, as discussion with Ben, who has Jewish origins, shows:

Ben: *I just don't like to label it 'Christian' you know I feel so [laughs] yeah and uncomfortable with the idea, for the same reason that I wouldn't call myself Jewish or I don't know I just find it yeah …and especially when you say 'Christ in the middle' aah [laughs by all] Really I don't know, He might be I'm just not sure. It's not, it's not something that I can see that I can say 'yes He's in the middle or this is the core of my belief.' I just can't see that so I can't really stand for that… I think it would be much easier for me if I would have been born Christian to say that but I think due to the fact that I was born a Jewish and I don't know just to put a man in the middle. I know that it's not the body, the physical body of the Christ but just this image, I just can't, I can't bear it [laughs]*
Interviewer*: So there is some sort of tension there for you to resolve?*
Ben*: Yeah cause Judaism there's nothing inside. There's kind of spirit in the middle and suddenly to put a man there is just… I just can't live with it [laughs]*

Ben was struggling to find his connection to Camphill as a Christian community. He was uncomfortable with Ian's idea of Christ at the core, as it held connotations of a man at the centre, which conflicted with the Judaism of his upbringing where 'spirit' was at the centre. It is clear that the idea of a Christ-centred philosophy is difficult for Ben not only due to his Jewish background but also because it lies outside his experiential reality. As such he finds himself unable to relate to it and unwilling to assent to it. Ben's struggle alerts us to a significant issue, especially when talking about

spirituality, namely that concepts may contain a core truth but how these are related to and understood is filtered through a complicated hermeneutical process that is firmly rooted in the history and assumptions of the hearer. What is heard as helpful for Ian is heard quite differently by Ben.

The importance of recognising the complicated hermeneutics of spiritual language was further highlighted by the various interpretations of the words 'Christ' and 'Christian' that people held and worked with. Esther, for example, defined Christianity as follows:

I would define Christianity again as creating a situation where love is the motivating force in life, I wouldn't define it as following a dogma. So I see it as a broader thing, but in, actually being in a very close relationship with one other person is a training ground.

For Esther, Christianity was closely related to modes of love which are manifested and revealed in human relationships. Ian holds as similar view regarding the association of Christianity with the idea of love:

I mean you might use the word Christian in…it's a substitution perhaps for the word love and one encourages people to act in a Christian way and that's understood and that's not em, doesn't matter whether you're a Catholic or a Quaker, everybody understands I think what that word 'Christian' stands for. But I mean it's not something that crops up very often. Human dignity and giving and love are the things are the common currency.

It is interesting that Ian perceives that Christian can be a 'code' word for love, the assumption being that the word 'love' has universal meaning. But of course this is not necessarily the case. Helen, coming from an atheistic background and with no formal Christian language framework, had learned to do an inner translation in order to find her own connection to the terms:

And I think I've just learned over the years to first translate it [the language of Christianity] *and then understand it on a different level not as a man but as a force and that, a universal force, the Christ being, love – you can substitute many things that make a lot more sense for me at different stages of my life and now I can quite happily say 'Christ' and I know what it means… I just see a force, something that lives in the world and our surroundings which informs my life… it's all one. So Christ is not separate from you and you're not separate from Christ or God basically. Steiner had to use language which always partitions off but the reality is it's all one and when I get back to that thought then I can sort of work with whatever language people come up with to describe this and that.*

While Ian binds the meaning of love to the Christian tradition and the person of Christ, Helen has come to equate the word 'Christ' with a more universal, non-personal force of love that is present for all within the world. The importance of this for the Camphill communities is, as we have seen previously, that even when people use overtly religious language, they often use it with personal meaning that may or may not relate to the tradition from whence it originates. Not recognising this important hermeneutical dynamic can clearly lead to difficulties when trying to communicate and work with the underpinning ethos of Camphill as a self-identified Christian community. It may proclaim to be Christian and people may use Christian language, but it may well be that there are not as many overtly Christian people (in a formal traditional sense) as this might at first suggest. On the one hand, Helen can discard the significance of Christian language as irrelevant to the meeting of spiritual needs:

Helen: *I'm not particularly interested or not interested or particularly fussed about what kind of language they use for how they express their Christianity or their spirituality but we do talk about yeah what does it mean. What kind of qualities do we want to develop and where can we find them… It's…more my own understanding that can then branch out and see*

what do they need, want to hear or where are they, how do they express themselves.

But on the other hand, those offering care and support within the community need to be aware of the spiritual significance of language and be clear as to what exactly is being said rather than what seems to be being said. There is an important point here regarding the fact that communicating with others about spiritual issues means meeting people where they are, rather than where we might think they are.

God and other spiritual beings

Following on from this discussion on spiritual language, it is not surprising that while there was acknowledgement of a spiritual realm, of spiritual beings, of God and Christ, the concept of a personal relationship with God did not seem to feature strongly in the spirituality of the participants. While God was seen as a creative force, that force was not necessarily personal:

And so there is innate beauty and order, harmony, wisdom behind it all. [the created world] *And for me that is… different people use different names, but for me that is God. It's beyond words*

Esther also believed in God but related more to spiritual beings and angels, both with which she claims to have had a personal experience:

Interviewer*: You talk about spiritual beings. Is there a concept of God or some higher power? Is that part of that for you, Esther?*
Esther*: Yes it is but not quite like Church of England or I don't mean to denigrate!*
Interviewer*: No, no just to find out what your concept and picture is, people do have different ideas*
Esther*: I think there's all ranges of spiritual beings in the sense of beings that are alive and real and have some kind of continuity to them but are*

not seen by human beings when they're physically incarnated [the humans that is]. *And I think that there are, well I know that they are there, you know, I have experienced them em not only as sort of what you might call an angel but also in another realm in nature forces and all of these things*

Esther does not elucidate how her concept of God differs from that of the Church of England tradition but it clearly does in her perception. While she along with other participants clearly believed in a spiritual world and spiritual beings which interact with this world, unlike the residents, the tendency was not to express these things in terms of a personal relationship or close identification with God

Life as a spiritual journey

A strong unifying theme that emerged with the co-workers was the belief that their life was a 'spiritual journey', within which there were many different paths. We might draw these paths together under four headings, each of which had a particular emphasis:

1. *experiential*
2. *intellectual*
3. *confirmational*
4. *revelatory*

All had had different starting points for that journey, some within a religious context, others elsewhere, and sought to pursue it through the path whose emphasis resonated most with them.

Experiential

For Esther the conscious starting point of her spiritual journey began with an explicit awareness of the 'spiritual world' that she first encountered as a

child. For her spirituality in a sense was, and seemed always to have been, very much about 'the known':

Esther: *My em upbringing was em a mixed bag but always fundamentally Christian in its orientation*. *From childhood onwards the reality of em what you might call the unseen part of the world or the not usually perceived by the more gross physical senses has been has been part of the realities that I work with… a direct sense for the realities of the spirit which were with me from earliest memories and working out of that and some experiences I had as a small child. For example, I was only 8 years of age when my father died and em was able to experience in the time around his death the realities of that which is experienced beyond the usual sensory experiences. I also was a person that always connected to this, I suppose popular science would call it ESP or something like that, where one could make a connection with somebody else, that didn't, you know like sort of a telephone line without wires. Now I'm not making great claims here I'm just, it's just that there was a reality for me in that – a sense of being able to be close to people I wasn't physically close to.*

For Esther the spiritual realities of life had been, and continued to be, part of her daily life, mediated through an ability to 'sense' the spiritual world and to 'connect' with others through a type of extra-sensory perception. While brought into sharper focus at times of trauma, these spiritual realities were nonetheless embedded in, and a significant part of, her day-to-day life. Esther's spirituality clearly had to do with connection; to that beyond the physical (vertical) and also towards others (horizontal). Rooted in the day-to-dayness of her life, this sense of the spiritual was something which Esther had never doubted as a reality:

Interviewer: *So would you say that* [the experience around the death of her father] *was a sort of confirmation of what you had always known was there or was it not?*

Esther*: I don't think I needed a conformation*
Interviewer*: It was just there?*
Esther*: It was just part of life along with all the other things…* F*or me the spirit isn't so so disconnected with life. In fact I think probably if I would describe my direction and my 'raison d'être' you might say em it would it would need to create situations where the spirit is manifest in practical everyday daily life. And I met in Camphill a very good way of doing that and I'm sure ultimately that's why I've been here for 40 years.*

Her experience of life and work within various Camphill communities over some 40 years had provided Esther with an ideal context for this type of practical spiritual development, which we will explore further later.

Intellectual
For others there was a sense that their awareness of spirituality and their spiritual journey had come to consciousness in a less obvious manner and at a later stage in life:

Interviewer*: What do you think we mean by spirituality? [Pause]*
Dominic: *Something that immediately comes into mind and then you think that's not quite right, is trying to know the unknowable, is the sense that you are always on this journey which you know and yet you don't know something. I suppose I, an evangelical Christian would look down their nose and say 'God heavens you really are a bit of a waste, a basket case Dominic because you know, I know God, I know'. I would have to say 'I'm sorry it's not that I don't know but I just have a journey of trying to find out'*

Dominic expressed spirituality in terms of paradoxes; both a destination and a journey, something known and yet still to be discovered. For Dominic spirituality seems to have to do with that which is, but yet needs to be

discovered on a personal, individual level; how exactly that which 'is' relates to an individual's life:

> **Interviewer***: So you said knowing the unknowable, getting to know the unknowable. What do you think the unknowable is in that sense? What is it that you are striving for?*
> **Dominic***: I'm just interested in my Christian journey which has taken into the fact that I very nearly became an ordained priest and have lived all the rest of my life with the question 'why didn't I?' And that's been an interesting journey in itself. Maybe my vocation was a social one and certainly when I went to Botton village it sort of answered so many questions - the journey that I'd made trying to do theological college and just being unhappy and miserable and difficult and not managing it and getting all the time on the wrong side of everybody and things, was not pleasant. I think I didn't want to define it so much as they wanted to define it. I love the journey, maybe there's the travelling, I mean I love travelling. I mean maybe that's a clue to that it is a journey for me… and at the moment I'm enjoying the journey very much because of the different, because of this great debate about the different religions which to try and find you know what the Muslim thinks about god and what a Jewish person thinks about God, the Christian can try and find the common ground.*

Dominic's journey was characterised as an on-going quest, a mix of questions, searching for answers, certainty and doubts. Thus, in contrast to Esther's experiential certainty of the 'unseen', for Dominic spirituality was to '*know the unknowable'* and had a strong focus on a largely intellectual grappling with paradoxes and contradictions. He appears to enjoy the questions that viewing life from a spiritual perspective poses but seems rather reluctant to, in a sense, be pinned down to firm beliefs: '*I think I didn't want to define it so much as they*[theological college] *wanted to define it. I love the journey…'* An intellectual rather than an experiential spirituality appeared to be that with which he was most comfortable:

Dominic: *a real evangelical Christian who I had to admire actually, he said, 'Dominic, stop thinking about God and let him into your heart!' And I thought, yes well I still remember what he said. And I think the journey, there's a journey in that because he's right and yet I think time wise he doesn't understand that there's a personal journey involved.*

Yet paradoxically while Dominic is seeking, he is doing so from a somewhat fixed point:

Interviewer: *So for you spirituality is searching is that part of the essence of it?*
Dominic: *Searching - well I'm very grounded in the Christian community. I love the act of consecration of man. I'm aware you can say looking on the outside I've arrived in one sense but I think having gone there you realise the journey's just begun…*

Dominic has found his spiritual home within the Christian community and from this established place, he quests out. Perhaps this security and point of orientation is needed to enable Dominic to explore the paradoxes of spirituality without losing his way completely. He links spirituality to mythology and archetypal stories, and seeks to connect certain streams of religious thought – eastern and western – as part of his broad approach. This seems at times to create some uncertainty as to how best to put spiritual concepts into practice in daily life. This is in direct contrast to Esther's very pragmatic spirituality previously outlined.

Confirmational
For others, their spiritual journey was characterised by the pursuit of a lifestyle through which they could confirm and express their own personalised spiritual concepts. This led them through various religious traditions until finally finding their 'place' within the Camphill community:

Guy*: Yeah I suppose I've probably come through quite a long path of discovery – I was a choir boy in a church choristering church in London and then I went to a Quaker school and then discovered Buddhism … the teachings, the how to, the path out of suffering, the path of the cause of suffering. And then I suppose from that the next step was actually joining Camphill. So I suppose until that, for the last 16 years it's bringing those streams together really… Well ultimately trying to become more conscious about myself but not in a self- conscious way*

Those with similar experiences to Guy's appear to have forged a base for their spirituality which is an amalgam of anthroposophy, Buddhist and/or other traditions, all of which work together to form their spiritual worldview or framework, as we have referred to this term previously. Their emphasis appears to be on personal spiritual development worked out within a community setting. They appear not to be searching so much for answers as seeking to work out or find confirmation for, within the community setting, that which they have discovered.

Revelatory

For some their spiritual journey was characterised by an openness to discovery. They have not yet come to a place of certainty within themselves with regards to their concepts of spirituality and are trying to remain alert to discerning the truth wherever they find it:

Scott*: I think that you can make very firm decisions about the spiritual questions and I think that they are not spiritual answers if you're making those very firm decisions. I think that you have to be open to the suggestions that are offered to you all the time I think that anybody is capable of ministering. I suppose I lean towards the Quaker philosophy when I say that. I think we are all able to speak truth out and we should all be open to hear that truth from wherever it comes.*

For Scott spirituality contains an element of receptivity - being open to suggestions and insights - along with the notion of revealed 'truth', that can come both from within self and from others. Contained in Scott's concept is the idea of universality of spirituality and that all are, in a sense, 'ordained'

These different spiritual paths highlighted above - *experiential, intellectual, confirmational, revelatory* - emphasise different ways in which people perceive and work out their spirituality. These different spiritual paths were also in some ways mirrored in people's approach to anthroposophy.

Anthroposophy and Spirituality

As we found with the Botton co-workers anthroposophy, as a conceptual framework within which spirituality was worked out, held some relevance for all participants. However, their relationship to it and the degree to which it was taken up varied considerably. For Esther, it was a framework which gave expression to spiritual realities. She had started from an experiential basis of the spiritual then found that anthroposophy added some concepts which gave shape to her experiences. In that context, she adopted it as *'a working hypothesis'*. Inherent in Esther's approach is the idea put forward by Steiner that spirituality is not primarily a subjective, individualised experience but a reality which can be verified by spiritual scientific investigation:

Esther*: It offered me an opportunity on the one hand to learn, to develop knowledge, you know like reading Steiner's lectures and putting some more, as Steiner put it, scientific knowledge to these things em and yeah I had some questions. I didn't just, just, like you were saying you know, I didn't just accept everything because it was written like this or because, even more, because an anthroposophist said it was like this. em I had questions, I met it with challenge but I think it, it, it's more like this, that if I went really directly to source as it were em then the things that I could learn and read and study about anthroposophy…,were confirmed either by*

my own experience or by my feeling for something, a kind of em. So that after a point I grew to taking the things that I read and learned as a working hypothesis rather than being just completely sceptical about them because so much else I could confirm out of my own experience as being a reality, that was something that I could accept and work with.

The practical application of anthroposophy for Esther's work life was also an important aspect in the process:

Esther: *I worked with special needs children, actually called them in those days handicapped children, yeah and em to be able to understand how Steiner described the incarnation process, that is the child coming into his body or the spiritual being of the child coming into his body, how the spirit takes hold of the body, the various em observable physical manifestations of that and the ways that if you observe this physically that then it might mean this in that difficult spiritual process ah and then use that therapeutically to help the child to gain a better relationship to his body thereby being less quote 'handicapped' em I think that's maybe you know very exciting.*

Anthroposophical concepts, which view processes such as child development as spiritual as well as physical phenomena, were resonant with Esther's own experience of the intimate connection between the physical and the spiritual and proved to be useful tools for Esther's therapeutic work with special needs children. Thus, it appears to be anthroposophy-in-practice which fires Esther's enthusiasm more than any other aspects.

In contrast, Ben is still testing anthroposophy against his own inner experiences and is open to looking more widely for answers to the questions he has with regards spirituality. The certainty which anthroposophical teachings appear to project are, therefore, at times at odds with his approach:

Ben: *In general when people start to talk about spirituality I find myself quite confused cause [laughs] it's not something that I can, I don't know, put into words so easily so…I think when you say you're a Christian then you need to stand for something that actually I'm not quite sure if I fully understand what it is to be a Christian or what it is to be a Jew or what it is to be an anthroposophist or whatever. So I cannot say that I'm this or that.*

Ben is not clear where anthroposophy fits with his spirituality. He is open to discovering truths for himself and at the moment is not yet tied to any particular concept or framework. This lack of a particular religious or ideological stance makes it more difficult for him to express what spirituality is in formal terms.

Anthroposophy in community

There were some interesting tensions which emerged around the perceptions of the relative roles of anthroposophy in the lives of residents and co-workers. At times there seemed to be an assumption that anthroposophy was primarily of use to co-workers and beyond the ability of residents to understand.

Well maybe just one thing that I think the fact that co-workers come here in a sense anthroposophy is an important element and maybe that's one of the reasons why we are here. And it's very much a conscious choice. We could, we have much more variety of possibilities and I do think perhaps some of the people [residents] *who are more independent obviously if they did have the intellectual faculties, they wouldn't live like this. They would live as people are living here* [in the wider community of Stourbridge]. *So we* [co-workers] *are coming from another space and in a sense the community of co-workers I see increasingly is the core of that. And I feel that anthroposophy is quite an intellectual path, that it doesn't necessarily appeal, and we don't have study groups with people with special needs*

about it. Their only experience is aroma, the light, the experiencing us and if it's not helping us to become better people then it's of no value. If it is, then it's good. So I think the co-workers and the people with special needs they have a shared destiny, they're in the same community but the volition, the decision, comes from a slightly different place in a way yeah

Guy perceives that co-workers have made a conscious choice to come to Camphill to work with anthroposophy. He highlights its intellectual side and implies that study of anthroposophy with the residents is not pursued for this reason. He reckons that the residents' only access to anthroposophy is through the co-workers and how they express it in their lives. This is a strange assumption given the degree of understanding of anthroposophical principles expressed by the residents. As we have shown earlier in this report, residents seemed quite at home with some substantial aspects of anthroposophy. The assumption that anthroposophy was a form of knowledge only available to co-workers raises important issues of whether co-workers were really listening to what residents were saying at a spiritual level. Likewise the idea of a '*community of co-worker'* does raise issues with regard to Camphill's stated aim of being inclusive. We highlight this observation here not as a judgement, but as an issue that is important to recognise and reflect upon.

Destiny, karma and reincarnation

Related to anthroposophy, as in the other communities, ideas of destiny, karma and reincarnation seemed important aspects of people's spirituality. These concepts were linked together by the participants, although karma and destiny were the only ones discussed in detail. They appeared to be concepts which some of the participants found helpful in making sense and finding meaning in some of their life experiences, particularly in the realm of relationships. For some they were adopted because they seemed to '*make sense*':

Interviewer*: You mentioned it earlier- destiny what does that word mean for you?*

Esther*: Well I do subscribe to the idea of very much put forward out of anthroposophy because they make a lot of sense to me and that involves the idea that people live on earth more than one time and that in past lives they might well have presented themselves very differently than now*

Interviewer*: We're talking about karma using it as a sort of if you like theory to inform everyday life and you mentioned past lives, future lives. Is this an idea of past lives a thing that people here have a direct experience of then – or is it a theoretical concept that's being applied?*

Helen*: I mean I haven't got any direct experience. For me it would be a very likely theoretical, yeah a very likely sort of, makes sense to me sort of idea*

Ian*: Yes*

Ben*: mm*

It appeared that destiny, karma and reincarnation were theoretical concepts that people used to help them make sense of current life experiences, although they articulated having no direct experiences that would confirm that they are true.

<u>Destiny</u>

Esther described her understanding of destiny as follows:

Esther: *So that there are lots of things that em the spiritual world which is other than physical, other than human beings, em helps us to order life, although we're not so conscious of it when we're in physical life, in such a way that we will meet the things that we need to meet in order to put right the things that we've done wrong in the past in order to learn what we need to learn for the future. That's the kind of things destiny is about.*

For Esther destiny is about our cooperation, albeit largely unconscious, with the spiritual world, in order that we meet situations that will offer us the opportunity to 'put right' mistakes from the past and learn for the future. From this perspective, Esther viewed current life situations as 'spiritually directed' and as having a 'higher' purpose. This idea of life as an opportunity for learning also emerged in the concept of karma.

Karma

Karma was a particularly prominent theme and, like destiny, seemed to encompass the idea of cause and effect and the chance to make good past and present mistakes and in so doing, influence the future. The concept seemed to gain most relevance in the area of relationships and had a consequence for the ways in which these were viewed and approached by co-workers:

Helen*: I think karma is this idea of cause and effect and basically that whatever you do has an effect and that effect if it's not satisfactorily solved will solve itself, or will present itself again in a different way. So if we fall out – we don't have to worry about that because we'll be back together and we'll work it out next time round and we'll work through it and so whatever stays unsolved in the human realm between people will eventually through karma, through a return to other lives, ultimately be redeemed.*

Interviewer: *Redeemed meaning?*

Helen: *Meaning solved, meaning come to a good conclusion, will be finished in a positive way… Maybe in this life you have to give up. I mean some relationships in my life that I haven't solved and I probably won't solve this life. And I feel 'fine ok see you later then' [laughter]*

Ian*: I mean people don't meet out of coincidence, that's speaking personally. There are karmic connections with everyone you meet and those karmic connections obviously come out of the past – one's past lives*

…karma it's something that comes from the past, from one's previous lives and is a step into the future. So it's a thread if you like that is eternal.

Karma as described was seen to play a significant role in relationships, both as an explanation for relationships and also as a way of coping with relationship difficulties. It was perceived that in terms of karma no relationships are 'accidental'; relationships as part of our learning on earth are 'purposeful' and thus are invested with spiritual significance. Further, linking the concepts of karma and reincarnation gives a sense of continuity throughout lives and provides the comfort of a second chance.

Helen and Ian concur on and commit to this concept of karma whereas Ben, while being intellectually drawn to the idea, views it as a theory still to be digested and tested for concrete utility within his own life experience:

Ben*: Karma –[pause] I think for me karma, for me at the moment is something quite abstract that I can't really say anything about it. I really like the idea of old karma and new karma – I think it's brilliant yeah [Laughs], I, I would like to...*
Interviewer*: There's a 'but' there?*
Ben: *I would really like to, I need to think about my life you know before and to see if it's really you know if something really happened, if it's really. It's a brilliant idea. I hope yeah I think it somehow yeah*

<u>Reincarnation and the individual eternal spirit</u>

The idea of reincarnation also held relevance for people's perceptions of disability. The idea that people have an inviolable, eternal spirit within them which lives many lives is interesting and forms an important spiritual basis for the caring practices of the co-workers. That a spirit chooses how it incarnates itself in this life has significance for the way in which co-workers viewed those with disabilities and seemed to help them to connect with the

residents that they offer support to. This aspect of reincarnation resonated quite clearly with some of the perceptions of the co-workers in Aberdeen:

That person in my concept is certainly definitely a person that em has em a spirit being that is em inviolate and eternal and with whom I've had relationships in the past in other forms and so that you know particularly if you look at people with special needs perhaps people very, very em who I find can have the experience that eh that inside of that body is really a great soul em and that for whatever reason has chosen to live this life on earth in this way em and when you… this experience comes like a, you know, like a ton of bricks at you. It's a really strong experience that, you hold onto that experience in the everyday life when sometimes it's not such a strong experience em you know that gives a lot of meaning to, and possibility to em just to take proper notice of other people and to be open to them.

Spirituality and personal spiritual development

Personal spiritual development emerged as a significant aspect of spirituality for all participants, although how this was pursued and the particular emphasis given to it as an element in the spiritual journey varied between individuals. Ian considers that all are engaged with spiritual development whether conscious of it of not:

Ian:*… But I mean it* [striving for spiritual development] *lives more or less strongly in everyone*
Interviewer*: Everyone being people within Camphill or people not involved in Camphill or just people?*
Ian*: No, I mean in everyone, in mankind. It lives somewhere.*

Ian's stance presumes some sort of universality in spirituality. This is taken a step further by Helen who indicates that not only do all individuals possess

an inherent spirituality, but that through life all are engaged in developing that spirituality in their own unique way:

Helen*: Spirit expresses itself in all sorts of different ways. And they think even the most depraved mass murdered there is an expression of spirit somewhere in their life… In some ways spirituality is a given –it's not something that's an optional, that you sort of either develop or not, but I think that the way that people understand it, feel it and express it depends a little bit on where they are in their lives or in their development or whatever*.

For Helen this individuality of expression ties in with a concept of different stages of spiritual development:

Spirituality expresses itself very differently in people and I sort of almost believe or think of spirituality as a yeah as a developmental line that is existent in each human person or human which expresses at different levels and in different ways and I mean the love between a mother and a child has a form of spirituality, for me. Do you see what I mean? So as you then come higher or walk up this developmental line you're awareness of others and your awareness of spirit how it expresses itself goes from the person to the interpersonal maybe to the overpersonal, transpersonal. That's a little bit of theoretical thought that I'm spinning around that. But that's how I experience it. So I think spirituality, any human expresses spirituality on different levels or in different ways and this is just my way of expressing it.

Spirituality for Helen is expressed by each individual according to their level of spiritual development. There is some idea of an individual's awareness of the spiritual evolving from personal to interpersonal to transpersonal. It is unclear whether this is for Helen a theoretical concept, an experience or both

– since she states it's '*a theoretical thought'* but also '*that's how I experience it'*.

Such assumptions about the universality of spirituality potentially have a range of implications, some helpful others less so. In the area of interpersonal relationships, the concept that we all possess an inherent spirituality, despite outward appearances and behaviours, can clearly be beneficial and facilitate connection, particularly to those perceived to be unlike one's self. However, the idea of different levels of spiritual development holds within it the possibility for distancing through the development of a 'hierarchy of spirituality' that potentially threatens meaningful spiritual inclusion. Further, if spirituality is seen to develop in a linear progression from personal to interpersonal to transpersonal, this could be understood to imply that having reached the transpersonal level the personal and interpersonal become less important, something which other participants in this study have indicated is not the case.

Esther, in line with her previously expressed outlook, emphasised a practical rather than a theoretical aspect of spiritual development:

> **Esther**: *And it's part of a spiritual development too how to do it* [learn to love yourself] *rightly and I think that spiritual development altogether has to do with not just sort of thinking it's all other worldly and somewhere up here you know it really comes right down into every aspect of who you are and how you work with yourself.*

Spiritual development for Esther is not '*other worldly*'. Rather it is firmly rooted in our physical existence. Esther is quite clear that for her, spiritual development should issue forth in service of others - an idea that we will explore more fully below.

Spirituality-in-Practice

As the foregoing indicates, all of our participants saw spirituality as having practical significance for their daily lives. People expressed this differently, but with the same idea of inner experience leading to outer action; to a 'practical spirituality':

> *Also actually to work with it* [spirituality] *in a way that went beyond myself. I think that's really important... So it came at a good moment for me to have a framework to take what I'd grown up with, what my experiences were and to do something for other people with that em and yeah I've been very grateful for that,…anthroposophy and the training and approach in Camphill had given a very good and practical avenue for giving expression to that* [spirituality]

There was the idea that inner spiritual experiences need to move outwards beyond the boundaries of the self and connect with others and the world through acts of service. Spirituality was seen as issuing not only in an inner experience but also in a desire to do something for others out of that experience. Anthroposophy, and in particular Camphill, provided some people with an avenue to take their 'inner experienced spiritual reality' and express it in practical service towards others.

Spirituality and altruism

This in turn, once again, leads us to the connection between spirituality and altruism that we noticed previously in this report. Serving others was clearly part of people's expressions of spirituality; in the broadest sense making a contribution to the overall objective of 'good'

> *The continuing effort to create the situation that serves the greater good or that serves the good in a sort of objective way I guess em that contributes to em that good would prevail over evil*

For some, this contribution to the greater good was seen as coming about through a focus on personal inner development:

In terms of spirituality for me I see that as a, in a sense trying to understand this core force and perhaps ultimately develop qualities within myself that will enable me to have a more harmonious physical effect on the environment. So by perhaps developing qualities of love and compassion and empathy that maybe is non-physical work –it's breathing, it's meditation, through that I can hopefully have a more harmonious impact on my fellow man and the planet. So I feel it's kind of one, it's one and the same but for me spirituality is the source. It's cultivating, enabling me to have a meaningful life.

For others this idea that individuals can make a difference to the 'bigger picture' clearly brought with it both a sense of empowerment and of responsibility. This was worked out, at the personal level, in serving others through 'love in action':

Esther*: But ultimately it's about, it's about helping each other, learning to love one another and putting one's, you know, one's strengths and talents and gifts at the service of others, I think really. So it's a very practical spirituality I feel [laughs*]
Interviewer*: So in terms of work what for you would be the motivation force behind the work that you've done in your life then would you say in Camphill?*
Esther*: Well I think I think the motivating force is that ultimately em the, I see the purpose of earthly life as an opportunity to learn how to love and em I mean this love in a sense that you, you know an ideal beyond what I could attain [laughs] em that has to do with putting oneself at the service of other human beings in a selfless way and of course selflessness is something that of course is really difficult to achieve*

Ian: *I think the whole process of giving – giving of oneself in order to try and help the other is important.…this is again for me where Christ comes in because the 'I' can be very aggressive, can be very self centred de facto but to redeem that, to make that into a selfless ego is really, that's what we're here for on this earth [laugh]*
Interviewer: *Is a selfless ego a contradiction in terms?*
Ian: *I don't think it is. I think it's sort of transformation, it's a mystery, but it's a sort of transformation that is, I think for me anyway, real. Not complete by no means, I mean I haven't …*

For Ian and Esther, their spirituality clearly encompassed a life of service. There was a recognition that this selfless giving as an expression of love was only made possible through some power greater than the self, which Ian identified as the transformative power of Christ.

Relationships as spirituality-in-practice
We found that, as with other groups, relationships were for many a key area of spirituality-in-practice. As shown above, they were held as spiritually significant through providing an avenue for service and a vehicle for spiritual development. They also presented the opportunity to learn to love as an act of will.

<u>Learning to love</u>
For some the act of connecting with the other out of our separateness and free will was seen as a spiritual act:

Human beings have free will and em that means that we can choose whether we are going to develop ourselves as people or whether we're going to act out of love or selfishly…I think that is the purpose of earthly life em the need to be locked in the body in a sense, to not for me to remember our spiritual origins and so forth so that we can do that [love others] *really out of our freedom…I think that earthly life makes us*

separate human beings that we're sitting there and you're going around and I'm going and when we reach out to each other then em we have to do that out of our separateness and eh really do that as a real will activity you know I will do this, it doesn't just happen naturally…that you do that has to do with caring about the well being and the development and so forth of the other person and put yourself at the service of that… you actually have to practice loving with real people whom you have a real relationship. …actually learning to love is something that you have to do in a relationship that has some sort of continuity to it.

For this participant, the purpose of life on earth and of our physicality is to forget that we are spiritual beings, so that out of our free will we reach out to each other from our separateness to love and to act altruistically. Creating such a connection is seen as an act of will and therefore an engagement of, and with, our spirituality. Spirituality expressed through relationships is an act of service worked out in the 'nitty gritty' of on-going relationships. Learning to love through such relationships was perceived as spirituality-in-practice.

In the development of these transformative relationships, the continuity and consistency achievable through community living was seen as an important factor in the potential for relationships to influence people's spiritual well-being. However, this idea of influencing others' spirituality was seen as a contentious and uncomfortable area by some, especially in the light of modern social policy:

But we have to do that in an environment which has said 'no longer are you the influence that you once were. You must not influence people in you own image as it were. It's like you mustn't make a, you mustn't influence the people, you mustn't brain wash them, you mustn't. And we're on a very fine line there and I think because of I think the principles of the supporting people are actually quite noble you know. That an individual

must carry his own, must be allowed to unfold in his total, his or her total freedom without unnecessary oppression or suppression from any outside sort of body. So we have to be enormously aware of that in its principle. Now in practice of course it's almost impossible because at a recent conference of supporting people, which included people with special needs, the person with special needs said, 'This is a lot of nonsense. You know what are you talking to me as if I mustn't have any influences. What are you –you've got your mum and dad at home, you've got your girlfriend who's chain smoking, all the influences that you as social workers have and you're trying to tear all these influences away from me. I'm not a guinea pig. I want to be loved…'

Co-workers were clearly aware of the fine balance between support and undue influence in this delicate area where the principles of policy and the day-to-day practice of supporting people with special needs appear, at times, to diverge and conflict.

Spirituality and work

In line with our experiences in the other communities, most of the participants were of the view that the work they were engaged in was an expression of their spirituality, although the word 'work' appeared to shift its meaning depending on whether it related to themselves, the residents, or those outside the Camphill Houses community. The co-workers regarded their work within Camphill Houses as service, reiterating the underlying ethos of Camphill already explored in Botton. In line with that observed previously, it was viewed as a practical expression of spirituality:

Work is an interesting area. It's one of those areas where you can work with spirituality in a very practical way. It's a service and yeah and I think that idea lives strongly in Camphill that you work not to gain something for

yourself, that you work to give. And for that I would say is the spirituality aspect of it, of that work

However, an added dimension that emerged was the idea that the spirituality resided not so much in the work itself, but rather in the interpersonal relationships that came about through work. The workplace and the relationships encountered there provided opportunities for working out 'karma', the spiritual significance of which we have already outlined:

Interviewer: *We mentioned a bit earlier on about work, about the work being part of the spiritual expression of the underlying ethos. Can you just elaborate on that a little bit more? Tell me what that means for each of you, how you interpret that?*
Ian*: Well I didn't necessarily mean the manual work or the work that one does from nine to five. I meant the interactions between people that very often happen during work, during the nine to five work –that's what I meant and I did elaborate a little bit because I talked about karma and the more fundamental relationships between people that don't necessarily have anything to do with antipathies and sympathies…So that's an area where one is in touch with the spiritual world, if you've got the eyes and ears to be aware of it.*

Others saw work in more pragmatic ways as something which provides a source of meaning and purpose to people and thereby potentially had a spiritual significance:

Scott: *There's an understanding that work is important to our lives and has a meaning beyond simply earning money and supporting our material needs. It has meaning and it has worth and that's as valid whether you have special needs, whether you as we all have to an extent but yeah there are requirements to a healthy human life that you should have some sort*

of spiritual acceptance of yourself, you should have material well-being, that you should have access to work and play

It was recognised, however, that for work to fulfil a spiritual purpose or to hold a spiritual meaning, it needed to be 'real' and of value:

So if you just go there and think, 'oh well they're all handicapped they can't do much so we'll just sort of do a bit of a pretend workshop for them' then you get pretend work.

This resonated quite closely with the dichotomy between meaningful work and busyness that we highlighted in our reflections on the Botton and Stourbridge residents. Work needs to be purposeful to be spiritual.

Work and payment

An interesting and challenging theme emerged around the issue of work and payment. Most co-workers expressed the view that work done for money is in some sense devalued and stripped of its spiritual significance:

Helen*: And that also underlies this whole idea of not being paid for your work. So you don't exchange your time like commodity but it's something you give freely and then you receive what your needs are. Your needs are being met through that and I think that is a very important part of Camphill.*

Ian*: Yes. Getting that message across can be very very stressful*

Helen*: Yeah*

Interviewer*: Why do you think that's stressful?*

Ian*: Well because a lot of our people come from the world where you go out to work, you get paid and you're free to spend that money however you will. That's the ethos out of which most of the people with special needs, well it's the ethos I came out of even. Yeah so that your labour was a commodity that was paid for and the spirit doesn't enter in there. So I*

mean some of our people simply don't see it. They don't see the relevance of doing work even if it benefits themselves let alone benefits other people – the work ethic. And again that's something that more and more exists in the outside world these days – people are not motivated to work really and if they are, the work's not there. So I think we have a real mix of people and some of them yeah it's quite an uphill struggle to maintain things like punctuality and commitment to doing something on a daily basis.

The idea that work is done for others and not for self or direct payment with one's needs being met by the community, is an underpinning tenet of Camphill. However, what appears to be being said here is that when work is done for money, it is somehow devalued. Ian even goes as far as to say that paid work is de-spiritualised work. This tension between work-for-payment and work-for-the-other created a tension between co-workers and residents, who live partly in the world outside Camphill House community (the world of work-for-payment) and who clearly want to be accepted by that world. Many residents felt that having a paid job was important for their self-esteem and the development of a positive sense of self. The difference in values between the 'world outside' and the world within the Camphill communities, and the different ways that work functioned and was interpreted in these two worlds, seemed to be overlooked by some of the co-workers. Further, as we have seen, many of the residents expressed a clear and positive work ethic. It may be that the lack of motivation highlighted by the co-workers emanates from a lack of meaningful, purposeful work for residents to engage in. The problem seems more that individuals do not perceive the work they do to be of value, rather than that they are not motivated to work.

This attitude to paid work, at times appeared to lead to some rather negative interpretations regarding the motivation of those who earn a salary, as opposed to those living in Camphill who do not:

We had, we have a difficult man who sometimes works in the garden and recently had two minders who are obviously paid to mind him. They weren't allowed to work for health and safety. So they both watched him and I just I don't know what I did but I felt yeah this is a monetary transaction. All I'm saying is I think If I went to my house or I've got to do tea I'm getting paid oh I don't know £8 an hour £6 an hour to do a job my relationship with those people is different to if I live with them. And I think that that's something to do with spirituality. I don't exactly know what it is but this transaction makes it a job which makes it, I'll put up with you for two hours, you're such a pain but I'm getting paid so I'll do it. But here we're not getting paid… I think if you were just, if it were just a money transaction and you knew oh it's teatime I'm off duty now I think the relationship would be quite different.

Here our participant seems to imply that that work done for money is somehow less spiritual. The idea that people may do paid work out of spiritual motivation is not an option that he considers. Problems may arise out of such a perception when one reflects on the aspirations of some of the residents who desire to contribute to society and to gain a sense of self-worth through doing a job that is fulfilling and worthy of payment. Their motivation may well be spiritual, but the spiritual framework focussed on here easily loses sight of this possibility. This is a tension that is particularly significant for the Stourbridge community because of their urban location and the fact that, in a real sense, residents inhabit two quite different worlds, with different value systems and expectations. The spiritual tension here is challenging and important.

Community living

The idea of community living was important for all of the communities we spent time in for obvious reasons. It is an aspect that underlies much of the discussion layed out in the report thus far. The Camphill Houses co-workers

articulated further dimensions of its spiritual significance in useful and subtly different ways to those already explored.

A common task

As we found previously, community living was seen as an empowering expression of spirituality wherein individuals, with similar ideals and a shared ethos, work together for a common cause. However, in Camphill Houses it was clear that this commonality was perceived differently by different co-workers, with individuality of emphasis on a number of key elements. There was some expression that Camphill is not unique in offering an avenue to pursue spiritual ideals and notably a lack a consensus as to precisely what the 'shared task' at Camphill Houses was, beyond the broad idea of a spiritual journey together:

Helen: *Well I think living an a spiritual community or a community where other people strive for the same kind of working with each other and insight is very powerful …There is something quite special about it working and sharing these ideas*

Interviewer*: And would it have needed to have been a Camphill community, Helen?*

Helen*: Not really, no. We were looking at a Buddhist community initially but there wasn't a, but I think very clearly early on realised that it also had to sort of form around a task. You couldn't just sort of come together because you both sort of, everybody had a wishy washy notion of spirituality. The task is a very important aspect. All sort of tools and vehicles on this path*

Guy: *On one plane we're a very dispirit group of people. We're totally different aren't we? But when you crystallise it down at its deepest level, as I said at the beginning, I think we are striving for those goals and if we're not careful we can end up bickering is it a vegan meal ,or a vegetarian and we get stuck on the intricacies is it a semi colon or a full stop because we have people who worry about that because that's the nature of it but if you*

see beyond that the, actually the core, you think, well actually, we have a route together.

Why this might have emerged in the Camphill Houses community and not in Aberdeen or Botton is not clear, but there was a sense, already alluded to, that individuality of spiritual expression appeared to be particularly marked within this community. Whether the structure and/or location of the community, dispersed within an urban environment, played any significant role in this respect, is worthy of reflection.

Supporting spiritual development

This idea of a shared spiritual journey, which for many of the co-workers *is* community, related *inter alia* to an ongoing process of intentional individual and communal spiritual development:

Interviewer*: How important is some kind of spiritual aspect to life to people here? I mean those of you who are here today, in your individual lives? How important is that or is it not important?*

Helen*: Well it's essential I think. It's basically the bedrock. If that wasn't there, I wouldn't be here. If there wasn't this striving towards to understand that more closely and working with that together also in a group, I wouldn't be in Camphill.*

Interviewer*: So it's pretty essential?*

Helen*: Well yeah. It's also the motivation why I first joined Camphill really - deep down it wasn't about working with people with special needs or even living in community, it was exploring that interface together with other people*.

Interviewer*: Is this something that would be sort of central to the sort of spirituality that is part of Camphill? An idea of spiritual growth and development?*

Helen*: From how I understand it I would say that spiritual growth is something that we aspire to and work on and yeah*

Spiritual development as an aspiration to be worked on is an underpinning tenet of community life and Helen's main reason for being in Camphill. The community was seen to create an opportunity and climate in which personal spiritual development could be pursued in a way that was not perceived possible for some participants in the 'outside world', which was perceived as a risky place to express spirituality. Community living was seen to provide a 'protected environment', a safe place in which to explicitly explore and express spirituality. To do this outside of community was felt to be very difficult:

> *I do feel that the spiritual I think we're given a bit of privilege in community to yeah to actually explore our spirituality yes … which you can't do running Tesco's. Well you can but I don't think I could. I admire the person, the manager who can really live a deeply spiritual life. I think he must be a very special person.*

Linked to this was the idea of community living upholding certain spiritual values within a secular world.

Being a 'light' to the world

For some, identification with a movement which upheld spiritual values in a secular society was the important aspect of community living:

> **Dominic***: I think we carry I think quite an interesting responsibility and looking at it historically communities, monastic communities settlements, Quaker villages all sort of things societies always had this wonderful symbiosis relationship with that as if society needed, as if society needed some sort of nourishment, substance to support it or so enliven it… I think community and society needs each other.*

Dominic perceives that the Camphill community has a responsibility to be a 'light to the world'. As such, the community has a spiritual significance not

only for his life but also for society. Further, in contrast to commonly held ideas that community living allows withdrawal and isolation from the world, Dominic feels that his spiritual path in community, while in a sense distancing him from the world, also allows him to step back and view it from a spiritual perspective. This enables insights into world events which those fully immersed in it miss:

You know you actually are in a funny inward way [I'm] quite involved in the world because the community gives you this space and freedom to do that. Whereas I think unfortunately or however it is people who are you know enormously engaged in the world but can't see what's going on.

It is clear that for Dominic spirituality is not divorced from what goes on in the world, although how much those living in community are actively engaged with the world was at times unclear.

It was apparent, however, that the perspective expressed above could create problems which, it was perceived, arise from Camphill's spiritual ethos:

When we do meet the world, we're seen as arrogant or insular or because I think unfortunately we try, we are privileged to see the world in a slightly different place…I think the last 10 years Camphill spends its, has got into this habit of always being on the back step from unkind social policy makers who think we're irrelevant to angry parents who think we haven't looked after little Johnny well enough and em we have to transform that. And I think the spiritual world and spirituality is one of the reasons why we're so misunderstood. So it's quite a controversial area.

There is a sense in which by his talk of 'angry parents' and 'unkind social policy makers', Dominic implies that Camphill is being unfairly persecuted for its spirituality and its beliefs. Spirituality is seen as the element which sets Camphill apart and makes it vulnerable to the anger, resentment and lack of

understanding of authorities and those outside Camphill. This raises important issues around the way in which Camphill communicates with authorities and service users and its perception of the reasons for difficulties in these areas.

Sharing life together

Given the foregoing, coupled with the view expressed on relationships as spirituality-in-practice, it is not surprising that there was a consensus that a shared life together provided unique opportunities to nourish and support spiritual well-being. Through living together in a consistent social context where people are valued and where there is an attempt to understand the individual as a whole person, bonds of loyalty and love are created which enable people to cope with life and which act as avenues for healing:

> *The spirit is still there and to connect that to that and that can be in very subtle moments and I think that's why this life sharing idea, this living with each other has such a lot of mileage because it happens not from 9-5 when I go in as a carer but it happens at nine thirty when we all going to bed and we meet on the stairs and we look in to each others eyes and there's this recognition and there's this real moment of warmth that goes back and forth which is then actually that nourishes… It's interesting what happens when you live with a group of people. That's always been a real wonderment to me because I think you end up loving them or each other as a house community - not necessarily liking, that's very different - but you love them and you defend them and they become your family, your thing and I've always seen that as part of the spiritual work that we all do together because I see them doing that to me as well*

However, such a positive view of community life has to be balanced with the reality that living and working together can act as a block to these moments, especially if people are too much in each others company, as already fully explored:

It's the balance isn't it? The thing that I've observed is seeing the same person all day and if you see someone at breakfast, you see them at the workshop and garden then you see them at lunch and then in the afternoon and then at supper time and in the evening –it's too much.

Honouring spiritual freedom

The theme of honouring spiritual freedom, one of the underpinning tenets of Camphill, was one that had emerged in other communities, particularly in relation to 'space for self'. Interestingly this was not an aspect that the Camphill Houses co-workers highlighted as especially relevant for them. Instead, this valuing of individual spiritual freedom within Camphill Houses community emerged most strongly through reflections on the considerable tension it created in the realm of community decision making. As such, this concept had considerable impact on the practicalities of community living. One consequence was an attempt to reach decisions by consensus rather than through a hierarchical structure or democracy. This created difficulties in two directions. Firstly, any individual acting out of their 'spiritual freedom' could wield considerable power, through the act of veto. This was exemplified by the struggle to find a common practice to foster a sense of cohesion amongst the co-workers. A number of practices including singing had been attempted but had been abandoned since some refused to participate. The only one which all would agree to was a time of silence:

Guy*: We've tried different things. We've tried singing-some people don't want to sing. We've tried games and it's again the ego –some people love singing, some don't and here* [time of silence] *it's totally it's egoless. You're not putting yourself there, you're just being there together in the silence. You're not trying to be smart, you're not trying to be stupid, you're not trying to, you're just being there…*

Interviewer*: Can that sometimes be detrimental to the community, that you know this idea of freedom when does it become when does somebody else's freedom become your prison?*
Dominic: *Yes it was an unhappy experience actually and I love singing and yet these people just wouldn't and it made me cross*
Guy*: And I think, I mean it's not that singing's the most important. If you want to sing you can sing whenever you want. So it's not the singing but it was to find an activity that we could do as a group.*

Secondly, and paradoxically, it also appeared to place considerable pressure on the individual to accept decisions with which they were not necessarily in tune, causing a potential inner conflict:

Dominic*: You actually do things in community which are almost against your own better judgement but because you respect your colleague's interest in something*
Scott*: But that's the interesting trade off though isn't it? Because I don't like feeling bullied into doing something that doesn't sit easily with me*
Dominic*: Of course*
Scott*: I can't bring myself to do it but I have to find a way of agreeing with that person*
Dominic*[Laughs] Yes and I think it's a very interesting process which is why communities become brother's keepers whether you like it or not…So everybody gets their kind of spiritual right and that's where we get unpopular I think*
Guy: *But I think a lot of modern ways of communicating and you realise that it's actually their responsibility, I remember when I first came here I was I was told that and I, I mean I can't make my wife happy. I mean I can provide a framework but it's up to every individual ultimately to find their own fulfilment and happiness.*

This tension between individual conviction and others' convictions, between feeling responsible for others and yet also remaining true to oneself, appeared to be an on-going dilemma of community living. It raised the interesting question of the tension between freedom and responsibility as a spiritual dilemma. The tenet of spiritual freedom is important, but people seem to be not quite sure how to act that out in the practicalities of day-to-day community living, which seems to lead to a degree of uncertainty. This also emerged as an influence on the spiritual practices within the Camphill Houses community.

Practices supporting spirituality and spiritual well-being

It was clear that co-workers recognised, both for themselves and for the residents, that supporting spirituality and spiritual well-being required recognition and acceptance of a wide variety of individual practices. People were free to find and pursue their own spiritual practices within or outside the Camphill Houses community, with there being very few 'organised' community practices.

Amongst the co-workers a number of practices were mentioned which various individuals perceived supported their spiritual well-being including study, meditation, space for silence, physical and breathing exercises. In contrast to the other communities we worked with, no one mentioned prayer as a spiritual practice and church going was similarly poorly represented amongst the co-workers. Two co-workers expressed that they felt 'at home' with Christian community form of worship, but none of the others articulated attendance at church as part of their spiritual practices. It was mentioned that the church of today was perhaps out of step with what people were searching for, and that there was a move away from organised communal spiritual practices to a more individualised expression of spirituality in which meeting the other was of major importance. In other words, there was a movement from an emphasis on transcendence to immanence.

Dominic*: We are caught in this particular time with a church becoming more and more irrelevant and yet still carrying this sense of the sacrament or the sense of some kind of ethereal, sort of that prayers are said, that people are prayerful, that people in their humility bow before as it were a divinity and an experience which is much more as it were meeting, more you could say, you know, one to one more.*

This shift in spirituality in the outside world was to some extent reflected within the Camphill Houses community.

Community practices

Bible evening and celebrating festivals were the only 'community activities' mentioned which were perceived to support spiritual well-being. It was clear that co-workers like the residents were seeking out their own means of supporting their spirituality and developing their spiritual well-being. Community orientated practices appeared to be in decline, particularly the traditional Camphill ones such as festivals and bible evening. Although these were still present at least nominally in Camphill Houses, their place within the present structure seemed unclear:

Interviewer: *Are these then things that people have to seek out for themselves rather than being structured or supported into the community life as such?*

Helen*: Well the festivals are obviously something that we aspire to celebrate. And they would support I think our spiritual life but the other things are very much up to the person themselves*

Interviewer*: Is bible evening still a regular occurrence within Camphill Houses?*

Helen: *I wouldn't say regular but on and off. Life is very full and but it sort of, it's definitely a living reality. That it, maybe it hasn't got the regularity*

as it did but it's definitely there as something that can be picked up and activated if we want…

Festivals

As has been previously expressed, the festivals were perceived to be a vehicle for the expression of spirituality and a support for spiritual well-being through providing a means of connecting to the meta-rhythm of the spirit in nature, and of bringing to awareness the interconnectedness of each person, through celebrating together. However, in contrast to other communities, it was clear that it is becoming increasingly difficult to find a consensus amongst the community as to how to celebrate the festivals:

You see the thing is changing so strongly isn't it? I mean we're in a crisis… some of the people with special needs are very strongly set in a certain sense of their own identity and what they, and they have no fear anymore. I mean I grew up in a Camphill which was you know you went to Bible evening, you went to meals, you went to.. and not out of force but out of something that's sort of unintangibly sort of was a spiritual ego which you have to be very also careful with but if it was done in freedom then people just enjoyed it… Suddenly in the last five years had almost had a complete turn around –'I'm not coming to bible evening. I'm not interested in your..' You know almost a kind of slap in the face. As if we've let something go very quickly because we've given people for the first, or have we just given people responsibility that we've never given them before? Is our spirituality, are we really achieving something that we've spent 60 years, or Camphill has spent 60 years trying to achieve- that is, actually for the first time giving people total freedom to come and go or are we actually at the point where the community is about to collapse in a pile of rubble? And maybe that's the best thing that's ever happened. You know it's a very interesting moment. And we're struggling to find a Christmas celebration this year. I've never known it such a struggle because people are really almost saying 'Leave me alone. I want to spend...' So no nativity plays

and no carol singing and no [laughs] and maybe that's a good thing, and that's the best thing that's happened because we need a moment's peace from it so that we can build up from the need again.

Dominic perceives that the festival problem is indicative of a certain crisis in Camphill Houses, which he sees evidenced in the increasing rejection of the traditional community spiritual practices of Camphill. This appears due to individualisation amongst the residents, and maybe also amongst co-workers, with regards expression of their spirituality. People seem no longer to want to 'fit in with' the community's formal ways of expressing spirituality-they want freedom to find their own way. Co-workers appear uncertain as to how to deal with this and what practices would support people's spiritual development and well-being. This lack of a clear direction may be part of the reason why residents seem more drawn to seek support for their spirituality outside the community.

A similar situation was occurring with Bible evening, with residents often opting out while co-workers still finding something of value in it, even if practiced intermittently and in a modified form: *'we sometimes we do have a bible evening but often people* [residents] *don't wish to come'.*

Camphill Houses in state of transition

Recognisable community spiritual practices per se did not seem to be the primary means by which spirituality and spiritual well-being were perceived to be supported within the Camphill Houses community. People appeared to be carving out their own practices, and finding their own way rather than being led by the community. The traditional Camphill spiritual practices e.g. bible evening, festivals, appear to some extent to be falling away. There was a sense in which Camphill Houses seemed to be in a state of transition with respect to finding new forms of practice which support and allow expression of spirituality and spiritual well-being. There seemed to be a degree of uncertainty as to how to take this forward and a difficulty in reaching

community consensus on such issues, perhaps due in part to the considerable individualisation of both co-workers and residents. The multiplicity of spiritual paths by which individuals had come to live in Camphill Houses may also have had a significant influence.

Conclusion

Life as a spiritual journey within which each was free to pursue their own individual spiritual path emerged as a strong motif running throughout the Camphill Houses co-workers' accounts of spirituality. This spiritual journey, although differently conceived, appeared to provide the motivational force for the co-workers to be in Camphill Houses, and for the way they engaged with the residents, the work and community practices. More than in the other communities, a marked individualisation of approach was apparent with contrasting and potentially conflicting views being expressed. This clearly impacted on the community spiritual practices and on other aspects of community life. These individual perspectives were further complicated by the hermeneutics of spiritual language and by assumptions regarding residents' understanding of spiritual concepts, including anthroposophy. These raise interesting questions for inclusive community living. Insights into the perceptions of co-workers on the concept and role of Camphill Houses as a basically 'Christian community'[14] within a secular society revealed some tensions. These are relevant insofar as they have the potential to impact on the way in which Camphill Houses engages with authorities and on the support offered residents, particular around areas such as work-for-payment.

[14] Footnote: for the co-owrkers this meant Christian as interpreted through anthroposophy'

Section Six: Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

As we reflect on our experiences within the various Camphill communities, it is clear that spirituality broadly defined is an integral aspect of the philosophy and the practices of community life in these communities. As mentioned in the introduction, it was not our intention to try to impose a preconception of the term 'spirituality', but rather to encourage people to give us a sense of what the word meant for them, both in theory and in practice. Consequently the descriptions and insights into the nature and place of spirituality within the communities is rich and diverse, but at the same time quite revealing.

Traditionally, Camphill has perceived itself as being a place where the spiritual is overtly significant. This proved to be the case. Spirituality in all of its diverse forms seemed to be very much a part of the ethos and the practices of those with whom we spent time. This was so both at what we might describe as the intentional and implicit levels. The formal spiritual structures of the community such as bible study, festivals and so forth remain important for some people, as does the philosophical and spiritual underpinning that emerged from anthroposophy. But things are changing and people's spiritual expressions and indeed their spiritual needs, along with the ways in which they seek fulfilment of them, are much wider than is often assumed. Like many people in the Western world, the people living and working within Camphill are expressing and living out diverse spiritual lives that may include, but are no longer defined by (if they ever were), formal religious structures and assumptions. Even those who do engage in formal practices of spiritual expression and development, such as those available through formal religion, often fill that experience with meaning and intention that stretches beyond normal expectations.

All of this offers real possibilities for Camphill communities in terms of recognising this diversity and beginning to explore what these new and innovative spiritual expressions might mean for the ways in which their communities are understood and what it might mean to live out the diversity of spiritualities that are present within the communities. In closing this report we will draw out some of the key issues that have arisen and in so doing begin to point towards some strategies and new possibilities for the future.

Spirituality as process rather than a 'thing'

Perhaps one of the most important things that has become clear as the study has progressed, is the fact that spirituality is more of a process than a formal concept. Initially we considered the possibility that we might be able to tie down a definition of spirituality that might in some way 'sum up' how people understand spirituality within the Camphill communities. It very quickly became clear that this was not going to be the case. No formal definition of spirituality emerged from the study. In one sense we could, of course, sum up people's spiritual experiences in terms of such things as 'a sense of meaning, purpose and hope', 'a sense of self and of relationship with that which is greater than self', 'a sense of connectedness' and so forth. There is no doubt that all of these experiences contributed to the meaning of spirituality for our participants. However, the fact that we have to use the term 'a sense of', immediately sets such an understanding apart from formal definitions as we might normally lay them down. To define something is to attempt linguistically to capture its essence in a series of words which then become definitive and illustrative of the boundaries of what is or what is not considered to relate to the thing being defined. Spirituality, at least as it has been expressed to us in this study, does not seem to work like that. There is a real sense in which spirituality is indefinable. Nevertheless, this indefinability does not prevent us from gaining deep insights into how spirituality is experienced and its significance for people's lives.

Indefinable

Spirituality is to a large extent indefinable. We do not mean by this that it is so obscure or esoteric that it is useless in any kind of practical sense. What we mean is that the ways in which we normally try to define things may not be the best approach when it comes to understanding spirituality. Spirituality relates to a realm of human experience which is very difficult to capture in terms of formal language. It is relatively easy to define something like a dog for example. Linguistically we can define a dog quite straight forwardly by pointing to its physical form and describing its features from an empirical point of view. A dog is visible and tangible and as such open to definition. Such a definition cannot help us to have any real understanding of what it is like to be a dog; dog feelings and experiences are not available to us in a straightforward empirical way. We can, nonetheless, describe and define a category of the physical world which is occupied by what we can generally define as 'dogs'. The reverse is the case for spirituality. We can't see it, touch it or measure it. We can only understand spirituality - at least within a research context - as it is expressed to us in the feelings and experiences of people who claim to be participating in that which they consider to be 'the spiritual'. We therefore capture spirituality as it is operationalised in people's lives and expressed in some form of language. These expressions of human spiritual experience are inevitably not neat and clearly defined. Rather they are broad, complex and unsystematic. Further, only a very narrow slice of these experiences is available via words. This being so, it may be that a narrow approach that attempts to 'define spirituality' in conventional terms is in fact the wrong approach.

Reflecting closely on those experiences which people living and working within the Camphill communities identified as being 'spiritual' has provided important insights into the spiritual realm of participants' experiences, but it has not tied it down neatly in the ways that formal definitions attempt to do. Spirituality was not, for the most part, perceived as a 'thing' that people have, but rather as an aspect of their lives that people participated in. In a

sense, the term spirituality might be perceived as conceptually parallel to the concept of religion. Nobody has it, or can have it. Indeed, as one reads through the literature on the study of religion, it is pretty clear that there is no single agreed definition of precisely what it is. Rather we participate in religion and as we do so we engage in an ongoing process of exploration, within which we never really know what religion means, but nonetheless discover that it is of vital importance for our lives. It seems that most of our participants viewed spirituality in a similar way. The point was not to define it, something that is probably not possible, but to find ways of participating in it which were life enhancing and sometimes transformative. Rather than seeking after narrow definitions, it is by listening to and reflecting on the broader streams of expressed experience, as they knit together to provide a patchwork of perspectives which form the essence of people's spiritual journeying, that we discover the relevance of the spiritual dimension for the lives of people who live and work in Camphill.

Spirituality as a process of sanctified journeying

In line with the previous point, we sensed that our participants did not understand spirituality as a thing to be had in the way that one might have a book or a sandwich. Rather it was generally perceived more as something in which they participated; a lifelong process wherein aspects of their lives took on dimensions that were clearly marked out as somehow different from the norm of everyday living, even if they were experienced in the midst of every day living. As people participated in religious practices, relationships, work, community and so forth, aspects of their lives in a real sense became sanctified. To sanctify something is to set it apart as somehow holy or sacred. Kenneth Pargament uses the term 'sanctification' to refer to this process:

> *Through which people view seemingly secular aspects of life as holding significance and character. Sanctification may be best understood as a different way of perceiving the world…when people sanctify, they look at*

life through a sacred lens…Through this lens, the visual field shifts and changes. What once appeared monochromatic, unidimensional, and ordinary becomes multicoloured, multilayered, mysterious, rich, unique, awesome, alive and powerful (Pargament 2007. p. 35).

This process of sanctification can have a theistic or a non-theistic root. For some the process of sanctification relates to seeing God's involvement in every aspect of daily life. Here people perceive aspects of life as manifestations of God. However, '*people can also sanctify objects indirectly by attributing qualities to them that are associated with the divine'*, (Pargament 2007 p. 38). As we reflect back on the experiences of our participants in this report, it could be argued that something not dissimilar to this process of sanctification is going on as people imbue sacred meaning to the apparently everyday experiences of such things as relationships, work, community living and so forth. If we think through these experiences as they have been framed by our participants, it is clear that whilst at one level they were mundane experiences i.e. of this world, the meanings that they placed upon them sanctified them and shifted the lens on the everydayness of their experiences from the mundane to the transcendent.

Highlighting the indefinability of spirituality and shifting the focus from an object to be identified to a sacred journey in which people participate, helps answer some of the potential criticisms that the understanding of spirituality which appears to underpin this report is overly broad. It is as people sanctify their everyday experiences and place them alongside their more overtly spiritual experiences that we can begin to understand the role that spirituality played in their lives.

Universality and individuality of spiritual expression

Theologian David Augsburger (1986) notes that religious beliefs are appropriated in three different but overlapping ways. In order to understand

the significance of a religious belief for an individual it is necessary to be aware of the full breadth of possibilities with regard to how they understand their religion and religious belief.

The same way as all others

Religions contain views, beliefs and perspectives that are common to *all* participants. These would be the basic belief systems that form the universal core of religious traditions. For example, all Christians believe in Jesus, all Muslims believe in Mohamed, all Buddhists believe in Buddha and so forth. These beliefs and assumptions are shared by all who participate in that particular religious system.

The same way as some others

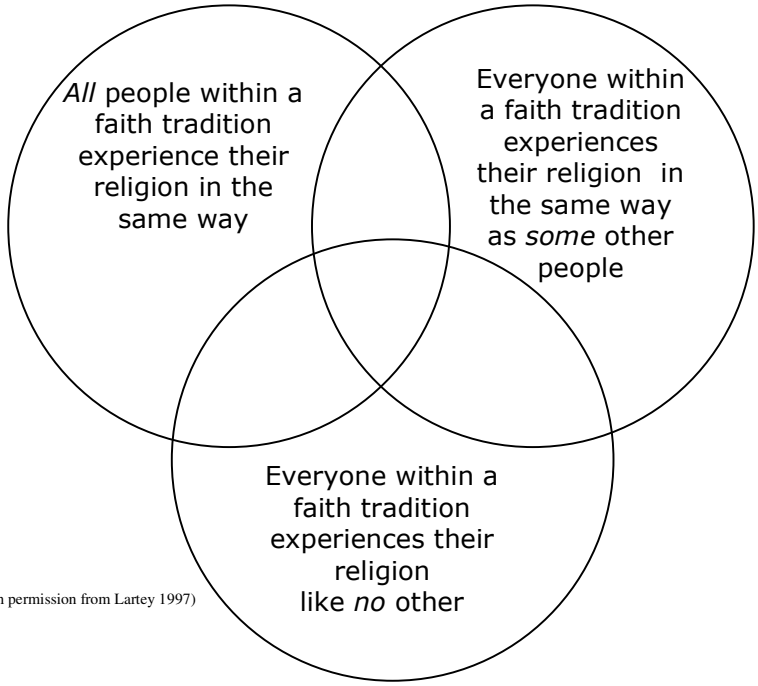
There are however, views and beliefs which only *some* people within these traditions believe in or allow to impact upon them. Therefore, within Christianity there are various denominations – Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran etc – with quite diverse theologies. Similarly with Islamic Shiite and Sunni factions. There is some continuity between that which all believers within the religion accept, but there may also be significant discontinuity over other issues.

Unique beliefs

Some of the things that participants in religious systems believe are uniquely held by individuals: 'How *I* understand my faith'. Here people may hold views and beliefs which are quite different in many ways from those which all or some adhere to. Diagram 1 below illustrates these three aspects to religious belief.

Diagram 1

The Universal and the Particular Dimensions of Religion



(Adapted with permission from Lartey 1997)

It is therefore not enough simply to know that a person is a Christian, a Muslim or a Jew. These labels tell you some things about the person at a certain level, but they may tell us very little about them on other levels. In order to understand how a religion functions in a person's life we need to understand and recognise each of these dimensions of their religious experience and interpretation.

The same thing applies to a wider conception of spirituality. There seem to be some universal spiritual expressions such as the search for meaning, purpose, hope, relationship and love. However, knowing these universal spiritual needs is not enough. We need to know what spirituality means in its micro as well as its macro dimensions. In our current context, it may not be

enough to know that the ethos of Camphill is spiritual and that it has a basis in the teachings of König and Steiner and the philosophy of anthroposophy. When we get down to the ways in which people process and interpret the ethos, philosophy and teachings within the different communities and within their diverse personal experiences things often look quite different.

The indications are that people are processing their religion in different ways; for some they are processing it in the same way as *some* others, i.e. traditional Christian religion, whilst others are processing it on a quite personal basis which is not determined or bound by any of traditional religion. This being so, consultation, with residents in particular, regarding the types of worship and spiritual expression that best suit their particular needs might be a way of addressing some of the dissonance in relation to the community church. A similar analysis might be useful with regard to the function of other formal and informal spiritual activities.

This tension between the universal and the micro dimensions of spirituality poses inevitable challenges to the ways in which Camphill communities work with the spiritual dimensions of community living. What is perceived as supportive to spiritual well-being for one person may have quite a different and even opposite function for another. For example, festivals can foster inclusion or exclusion. It is also possible that individuality of spiritual expression could become a threat to the cohesion of a community such as Stourbridge where the boundaries are much more diffuse than elsewhere. A lack of physical boundaries could perhaps make it more difficult to 'contain' divergent expressions of spirituality and still retain some senses of unified community.

Religious and non-religious expressions of spirituality

As one might have expected our research uncovered a richness and diversity of spiritual experience and focus. It was clear that religion remained for

many a significance locus for spiritual expression and development. People engaged with religious communities and were clearly nurtured through participating in them and their formal religious practices.

Whilst some people had a formal commitment to a particular religious system, it was interesting the way in which others mixed their religion, primarily their Christian religion, with insights and values from anthroposophy. People consciously or unconsciously incorporated elements of anthroposophy with their religious beliefs to create a fascinating blend of perspectives. A good example of this is the way that the ideas of reincarnation, karma and destiny, which are not traditional Christian ideas, were blended with traditional Christianity to provide a spiritual framework that helped some people to hold together their understandings of spirituality. For some people this anthroposophical perspective proved to be a helpful framework, but for others it acted as a barrier insofar as it was perceived to be overly intellectual. There was a further interesting contrast between the idea expressed by some co-workers that anthroposophy was perceived as being beyond the ability of residents to comprehend and the clear understandings of this system that was expressed by some residents. There may be scope for closer interaction and communication between co-workers and residents around these issues.

With regards expression of spirituality we found that it was possible to break down people's practices into formal and informal spiritual practices.

Formal spiritual practices

The idea of formal and informal spiritual practices was interesting and sits quite well within the framework of sanctification that was highlighted previously. A spiritual practice is any activity that one associates with cultivating one's spirituality. Formal spiritual practices would include such things as prayer, meditation, church attendance, celebration of festivals and

scripture or inspiration reading. Most of the formal spiritual practices that our participants engaged in were religious or at least transcendent in the sense that they were aimed at something beyond themselves. Having said that, and in line with the threefold understanding of religious and spiritual engagement highlighted previously, people used formal spiritual practices in quite different ways. For example, attending worship did not necessarily have the same function for each person attending. For some it was an encounter with God, for others is was a social experience and for others it was a place where one works out particular responsibilities which are valued and which bolster self-esteem. There is therefore a need, even with people who are apparently overtly religious, to ask the question: '*What is the meaning of this practice for the individual carrying it out?'* In other words, attending to the spiritual requires looking, listening and seeing in quite particular ways, which take into account the perspective of the individual being attended to. We will develop this point more fully below.

In line with the opinions of many people in the United Kingdom, religion remained significant for some people, but for others their spiritual expression was not necessarily tied in with formal religious structures. In general, co-workers were less likely to express their spirituality within a traditional religious context than residents. Many of the co-workers with whom we spent time appeared to come from backgrounds wherein they have had no formal religious input or/and who had, for whatever reason, rejected a traditional religious background in favour of anthroposophy. This contrasted in an interesting way with the perspectives of a number of the residents who, in general, did not appear to connect strongly to anthroposophy and Christian community worship and often appeared comfortable with the traditional Christian religion of their upbringing. This tension may be significant insofar as it may be important for co-workers to recognise that religion forms a significant aspect of the spiritual experience of many residents and that they should be given the opportunities to connect with rituals and forms of worship with which they feel comfortable.

Informal spiritual practices

Informal spiritual practices relate to actions or series of actions that work together in order to cultivate an individual's or a community's spirituality. Such practices are not structured or necessarily intentional, i.e. the person does not formulate them primarily in spiritual terms. They simply occur as part of one's day-to-day life. They become spiritual as the person gives them particular spiritual meanings. So things like relationships, work and finding space for one's self became informal spiritual practices which gave not only a sense of meaning, value and purpose, but also a sense of self-transcendence.

Relationships

It was clear that relationships formed an important dimension of people's understanding of spirituality and were a vital aspect of the expression of their lived experience of the spiritual. For some their primary spiritual relationships were with God. Here we found God grafted into their social network and acting as a powerful resource for hope and comfort, particularly in times of crisis and difficulty. People prayed regularly, went to church, engaged in formal religious practise and lived lives in the knowledge of a divine presence that was clearly an important aspect within their lives. This being so, the religious care of people living and working within the Camphill communities remains an aspect that requires to be understood and enabled irrespective of whether or not these views are shared by others within the community.

For others, relationships did not have to be transcendent for them to be considered spiritual. Time and again when people were asked about the nature of spirituality they would reply in terms of relationships with people. This was so for both residents and co-workers. Such relationships were clearly associated with the sacred, spiritual aspects of people's lives insofar as they were set apart (sanctified) as emotional spaces which were quite different from the rest of people's lives and within which a sense of relational

transcendence was recognised and lived out[15]. There were also subtle but distinct differences between the two groups. Residents appeared to view relationships as conduits of the spiritual i.e. the temporal was recognised as an expression of the spiritual and a conduit for it. Relationships were valued therefore as an end in themselves. However, co-workers emphasised more the discerning of the spiritual within the temporal i.e. in spite of the temporal. Relationships were valued as a means to an end i.e. connecting with the spirit within the other.

Precisely why this might be is, of course, difficult to gauge completely. It may be that people are unclear about what spirituality without religion might actually look like and therefore use the language of relationship as an equivalent to the language of transcendence. It may also be that the language of relationship is the common currency within the Camphill communities. In village communities, residents appeared to have a range of relationships leading to a sense of interconnectedness within and between the community and beyond (family ties for many were still significant). This matrix of relationships is the primary place where people receive their identity. We use the term 'receive' here quite deliberately. Scottish philosopher John Macmurray (Macmurray 1961; 1991) offers a perspective on personhood and identity formation understood in terms of *relationship* and *resistance*. In distinction from Cartesian notions that the essential self is the isolated thinking self, Macmurray argues that we become who and what we are (develop our personhood and identity) not as we reflect on our own, but as we relate to and with others. It is as we encounter others in meaningful personal relationships, as we engage in actions with and towards one another, that we discover the limits of the self: our *identity* and personhood. If at a minimum, spirituality relates to the human desire to relate and to be connected, then the sense of relational continuity and interconnectedness that is characteristic of Camphill communities will inevitably impact upon the

[15] The connection between spirituality and relationships is well recognised within the literature. (Hay and Nye 2006)

ways in which people articulate that experience and desire. Therefore, for people who have no interest in formal religion or who have pushed away from it, to articulate their innate desire to relate in temporal rather than transcendent relationship is not surprising and is fully reflective of the context and ethos within which they live and work. Relationships provide a sense of identity, locate a person in the world in a quite particular way and enable them to transcend themselves in the form of reaching for the other. Through relationships people defined themselves within the context of their past, found meaning in life in the present, unravelled their purpose and found support to continue their life journey with hope. Relationships thus provided a:

- sense of continuity: connection to past, present and future i.e. a place in time;
- sense of shared direction and story: context in which life events acknowledged and support given;
- a grounding for identity formation: affirmation of self, self-worth, place in the world;
- a conduit for the possibility of intimacy: of knowing and being known, breaking isolation and establishing connectedness;
- opportunities for self-transcendence;
- a sense of purpose e.g. opportunities for service.

Work

A second important informal spiritual practice revolved around the issue of work. Now at first the idea that work relates to the spiritual may seem a little dissonant. However, a deeper reflection reveals that work in its various forms had a sacred dimension in the perception of many of our participants. It is important to highlight that our participants clearly saw work as a deeply meaningful aspect of their lives. It was not simply a matter of busyness, i.e. finding ways to keep occupied and to fill in their days. Work provided people with a sense of meaning, purpose, identity and fulfilment. However, this meaning fulfilling dimension of work only seemed to operate if it 'fitted' in

some way with the individual's aspirations. In other words, the work had to be valued by the individual within their frame of reference. This value could be ascribed according to the person's skill in making a particular product or it could be valued in terms of its impact on others, i.e. the ability of a person's work to do good for others. This seemed to be easier within the village communities where most worked within the boundaries of the community and the community itself decided the value of the work done; where work was given specific value by the place accorded to it within the community. Work here was perceived as goal orientated and contributing to the wider good.

In the urban community ascribing value to work was a more complex issue, possibly due in part to the more 'porous' boundaries of the community and in part to the differing aspirations of the co-workers and residents. In line with the village communities, co-workers tended to value work according to the traditional Camphill ethos wherein work is seen as done for others and thus of value no matter what it might be. In contrast, for many of the residents work was valued insofar as it enabled them to perceive themselves, not defined by their special needs but, as individuals capable of making a worthwhile contribution to society. For a number, paid work which they themselves considered meaningful and purposeful, was a significant marker of that. In a sense, work for these individuals was sanctified not because it was valued within the Camphill community, but rather because it had value independent of that, in the wider community of society. This is an important difference to grasp, especially by those who seek to offer to support the spiritual needs of these people.

It is also interesting here to note that within the definition of 'work' as a spiritual practice held by the co-workers, there was the notion that this included 'community building' and 'working at relationships with the residents'. There was no sense that this was the case amongst the residents.

Formal and informal spiritual practices such as the foregoing alert us to the need for co-workers to be aware that spirituality is very much tied up with the everyday practices of community life, but not always necessarily in the way in which they perceive them. Co-workers, therefore, need to begin to listen differently to that which they assume to be normal and everyday encounters and to the way in which the residents perceive these.

The unseen

Although much of what people, and in particular the residents, described as relating to spirituality was grounded in day to day experiences and practices, there was a keen appreciation amongst all participants that spirituality was also related closely to what they loosely described as 'the unseen.' The unseen had to do with the sense of that which is non-material - whether that be considered God, a higher power or spiritual beings - and which was somehow directly involved in a person's life in ways which were tangible and recognisable. The 'unseen' was perceived as a significant element of people's spiritual experiences, an element which was separate from, yet very much a part of, the physical world of day-to-day living. People expressed this in different ways, but in essence it referred to a sense of something 'more than' and 'beyond' the physical which, at the same time, permeated the physical in concrete ways.

This sense of the unseen was particularly acute during times of crisis and bereavement, but for a number of people it was also an ever-present reality. Talk of angels, god, heaven, spiritual world and so forth speckled the language of a number of people and enabled us to get a sense of the thinness of the line between the numinous and the mundane. Life was constantly interrupted by spiritual intervention, which could at times be unsettling but was often deep and comforting.

At one level, this kind of supernatural perception of the world might sound rather strange. We could easily dismiss it as either another manifestation of sanctification, in this case the sanctification of unusual experiences, or as an anomaly that relates to the way in which the philosophy of Camphill has impacted upon the perceptions of people involved within that community. In other words, they interpret particular events and situations in particular ways because the environment and philosophy of Camphill provides them with the framework of beliefs to do this. However, if we think about such spiritual experiences in the light of the fact that 76% of the national population are now likely to admit to having had a spiritual or religious experience, the great majority of these not being regular church attenders, then the picture looks slightly different (Hay and Nye 2001) . David Hay has done some fascinating research into contemporary expressions of spiritual experiencing. It shows that unusual encounters and experiences that are considered to be 'supernatural' are, in fact, relatively common amongst the population. Table 1 below indicates some of Hay's findings.

TABLE 1: FREQUENCY OF REPORT OF RELIGIOUS OR SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE IN BRITAIN FOR THE YEARS 1987 AND 2000

	1987	**2000**
A patterning of events	29%	55%
Awareness of the presence of God	27%	38%
Awareness of prayer being answered	25%	37%
Awareness of a sacred presence in nature	16%	29%
Awareness of the presence of the dead	18%	25%
Awareness of an evil presence	12%	25%
CUMULATIVE TOTAL	(48%) *	76%

*This includes totals for respondents to two additional questions asked in 1987 about 'a presence not called God' (22%) and 'awareness that all things are One' (5%), i.e. the total of 76% for the year 2000 is quite likely to be relatively speaking an underestimate.

The idea of the 'unseen' may therefore be a remarkably regular occurrence within the general population. However, what Hay indicates *inter alia* is that within our current social climate, spirituality and religion are not things that people tend to talk about. People are much more comfortable talking about their sex lives than their spiritual lives! This being so, people tend not to communicate their encounters with the 'unseen' even when they know that they occur. In contrast, our experience within the Camphill communities was otherwise. Participants were very willing to talk about spirituality and in particular their experiences of the 'unseen'. It may be that the philosophy and spiritual milieu of the Camphill communities provides people with a safe space within which they can more easily articulate those experiences that they may be socialised into concealing in other circumstances. If this analysis is true, then Camphill serves an important purpose by providing a space where people can honestly and openly discuss their spiritual experiences and explore dimensions of their lives that they could not explore elsewhere.

The idea of the 'unseen' was also central to the motivations and ethos out of which the co-workers related to those they supported. Whilst, for an outsider, the concept of reincarnation might be a concern, in fact it seemed largely to function quite constructively in the lives of co-workers. It seemed to enable people to see the real value in people with disabilities. It also provided a motivation for support and care, based on the assumption that the resultant relationship has a deeper meaning for the individuals involved, both in terms of their spirit's journey in this life and in having consequences beyond this life. Of course, one might argue that this is a poor or even partially self-centred motivation for care. To care for someone in the hope of advancing your own spiritual development appears less than altruistic.

However, one has to ask whether this motivation is morally and spiritually any worse or better than standard motivations for care that are based on the economic exchange of labour. Is the fact that a professional carer cares primarily because they will get financial recompense any worse or better than a carer who cares because they hope for spiritual benefits in this or the afterlife? We suspect that, at a practical level, initial concerns about the impact of the belief in reincarnation are probably unfounded. For co-workers, particular those working with people with profound intellectual disabilities, the idea of the 'unseen' as expressed in certain key anthroposophical beliefs and worked through into practice offered a basis for care which was respectful of the individual, produced good motivation and which generally resulted in good practice.

That being said, there remains a danger that in striving to aid the development of the spiritual potential of another individual as well as their own, co-workers may perceive their task from an angle that assumes a particular preconceived notion of the nature of that potential and their own role in enabling that to unfold. If this occurs, the ways in which individuals themselves see the positive development of their spiritual potential could easily be overlooked.

Death, dying and afterlife

It was interesting and significant that one of the common areas that people associated with spirituality and, in particular, the 'unseen', was the area of death and dying. As we have seen people had a wide variety of perspectives on this aspect of life ranging from traditional understanding of heaven to anthroposophical ideas about angels and reincarnation. The key point that underpinned all of our conversations on this is that people believed that death is not the end; that there is something more. However, referring back to our threefold understanding of religious experience presented previously, it was clear that concepts such heaven, reincarnation and the afterlife had

both general and particular meanings. It was clear that people used various ways of negotiating and navigating issues of life and death which were often highly individualised. In order to understand and genuinely be alongside people as they work through issues of bereavement, it is necessary to be aware of the significance of the unseen and to be able to recognise the variety of ways in which people understand and process this aspect of experience in the context of death, dying and the afterlife.

Spirituality and community living

The significance of community living as an expression of spirituality and a vehicle for spiritual development differed between communities and individuals. The village communities focused on creating community together within defined boundaries and over a fairly long period of time. In the urban community, community is primarily perceived as a means for fostering the independence of residents while offering on-going support. Put slightly differently, some communities focused on the importance of the community as a place for developing interconnectedness and interdependency, whilst others saw the community as a place where people (those with special needs) learned to live outside of the community. This again highlights the interesting tension between the individualistic assumptions of contemporary society and the more communal and spiritual foundations of the Camphill communities, along with how complicated it can be for people to negotiate these boundaries. These differences create tensions and also issue in a differing significance of community for people's expression of spirituality.

Overall, community living offered the possibility of:

- Purposeful living
- Confirmation of place
- Identity
- Meaning
- Expressing spirituality

- Individual spiritual development

For some of co-workers community living was clearly a form of spiritual practice in and of itself. Indeed, for some co-workers it was community living that had brought them into Camphill as a means of them furthering their own spiritual path, rather than the desire to live and work with adults with special needs per se. For residents it did not overtly hold this meaning. It seemed more to be the context within which their lives were currently unfolding rather than a specifically chosen vehicle for their spiritual path.[16]

Tradition and change

One overarching question then is precisely how Camphill communities can encompass a seemingly increasing individualisation amongst both co-workers and residents with regards expression of spirituality and find space within the community structure for practices, both formal and informal, that might support such a diversity of spiritual development. This is likely to involve working creatively with the new ways of spiritual practice that are emerging in the communities, whilst at the same time respecting and expressing the traditions which have evolved over the years. Reviewing and evaluating past, current and emerging practices, with a view to discerning how they meet the spiritual needs of both the community as a whole and of the individuals within the community, will be an on-going process. This may be easier to do in the village communities where the physical boundaries create some cohesion and therefore where it seems that the ideological boundaries could in a sense be freer i.e. individuality of spirituality/questioning of practices may not be such a threat to the integrity of the community as in a situation like Stourbridge where, with no physical boundaries, the community may not have a central shared ethos which holds it together as a coherent whole.

[16] For example –would people with special needs choose to live in community like co-workers if they did not have special needs? Certainly in Stourbridge there were strong indications that they would not.

Conclusion

Our research has shown that people living and working in the Camphill communities clearly have an awareness of the spiritual and have, to varying extents, integrated that awareness into their day-to-day practices. The intuitive perception that spirituality is an important dimension of the life and work of Camphill seems to have some degree of empirical validity.

Nevertheless, there is, to some extent, a lack of clarity and a degree of miscommunication around important spiritual issues, at least within the communities participating in the research. To a point this is inevitable within a social context which, as we have highlighted, is shifting and changing quite considerably in its relationship to, and understanding of, the spiritual dimensions of life. In a spiritually plural country such as the United Kingdom, within which the contours and boundaries of spirituality have become expanded and blurred, it would be surprising if this was not reflected somehow in the spiritual lives of the Camphill communities.

We hope that by highlighting some of these tensions as they are being worked out within the communities, co-workers and residents might become conscious of some spiritual aspects of day-to-day living that they may not have noticed or effectively understood up until now. In noticing differently, perhaps their practices will be enhanced as they try to accommodate the new ways of looking at things that we hope this report offers.

How might these findings be used?

People described spirituality as a journey or a process rather than a 'thing'. What emerged was a need for all in the community to discover how to become appropriately sensitive to the subtle and complex aspects of their own and of others' spiritual journeys. It was clear that there was no universally applicable model of spirituality that 'fitted' all of the Camphill communities. Although there were core features (relatedness, community,

journeying, God/the unseen and so forth), each community, and to some extent each individual, worked out what spirituality meant in their unique situation.

The emergence of formal and informal spiritual practices and their significance for people's spiritual well-being emphasises that spirituality is very much tied up with everyday life. To discern where and when spiritual practices are occurring often calls for the ability to listen differently and to be sensitive to perspectives other than the obvious. Therefore, what is required is a strategy and an approach which will enable co-workers to recognise and engage with the wide variety of spiritual expressions that are present within the communities. We believe that the essence of such an approach is present within the findings offered in this report. The key is to actualise and operationalise the data.

Thus, we would be keen that the findings of this report not only inform our understanding of the spiritual practices of the Camphill communities, but that they also act as a catalyst for practical change. There appears to be a need to re-assess current ways of understanding and meeting spiritual needs within the Camphill communities. Bearing in mind the expressed importance of the spiritual for both residents and co-workers and the obvious diversity in precisely how such needs might find fulfilment, it would be helpful for communities to explore whether and how people's spiritual journey is being supported within the life of the communities. We suggest that this could initially be done in two ways:

1 Attending to the spiritual requires looking, listening and seeing in quite particular ways. Such ways of looking and listening are not necessarily natural or obvious. Learning the skills to support the spiritual dimension of people's life requires some degree of training and exposure to new ideas and perspectives. Therefore, we would recommend that the findings of this report be used to develop formal

programme of education for co-workers. The programme would distil the key elements of this report relating to the nature and practice of spirituality within the Camphill communities. It would explore ways in which people could effectively work with these within the diverse Camphill communities. The intention would be to help people to see the importance of the spiritual for the lives of all involved with Camphill and to work out specific strategies and approaches that would enable people to effectively support this dimension of people's experiences. Professor Swinton through the Centre for Spirituality, Health and Disability has developed similar programmes in the past and would be in a position to advise on how best this might be done.

2 As part of this general educational initiative, we would recommend a series of facilitated meetings involving residents and co-workers. The intention would be to explore ways in which the kinds of miscommunication and differences in perspective highlighted in this report could be recognised and worked through together.

Taken together, these two relatively straightforward initiatives would lay a firm foundation for the recognition and effective incorporation of spirituality into the daily practices of Camphill in ways which are intentional, rather than simply implicit.

It is our hope that this report acts as a foundation for further development. Spirituality is central to the identity and practice of the Camphill communities. But its meaning is shifting and changing. We hope that what we offer here will give people a sense of the direction and implications of such shifts and changes and open up new possibilities for being together in ways that are life-bringing and, perhaps, transformative.

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Glossary

Special needs: the term 'special needs' is used throughout the report to encompass people who have a range of disabilities and difficulties including learning disabilities, mental health problems and other difficulties requiring additional support e.g. emotional and behavioural problems.

Resident: the term used throughout this report to denote those with special needs living within a Camphill community.

Village community: by the term 'village community' we mean a community with clearly defined geographical boundaries, within which most community members live and work. In principle a person can live, work and worship without having to leave the boundaries of the 'village'. Within Camphill, there is a variety of different modes of community living, but it is perhaps this way of doing community that is most associated with Camphill in the mind of the general public.

Villager: originally a term used within Camphill village communities to denote those with special needs living in the community. Now no longer universally used.

Co-worker: those living within Camphill communities, some with their families, supporting those with special needs. They have responsibilities in the home, work, administrative, social and spiritual life of the community. Co-workers do not draw a salary, but their reasonable needs are met by the community from its resources.

Employees: those working in the Camphill communities who receive a salary. Whilst historically Camphill communities have relied on co-workers, all centres nowadays rely to varying degrees on employees. Typical areas of responsibility include specialist and craft teaching, therapies, social care support, administration and estate maintenance.

Short term co-workers: those who come from all over the world to join a Camphill community as resident guest volunteers for a period of six months or more.

The Christian Community: The Christian Community was established in 1922 under the leadership of Friedrich Rittelmeyer. Rudolf Steiner played a role in creating its constitution and forms of service. The centre of the community's life is a morning Eucharist, or communion service, known as The Act of Consecration of Man. The Christian Community has a creed that states the central truths of Christianity. For further information see: www.thechristiancommunity.co.uk

Appendix 1: Quantitative analysis

Assessment of the spiritual involvement and beliefs of Co-workers and Employees: Camphill Aberdeen

Introduction

The qualitative work that has been outlined in Section 3 gave us some deep insights into the nature and function of spirituality within the Camphill communities in Aberdeen. As mentioned in the methods section, we initially decided that it would be helpful to complement this qualitative aspect with a quantitative dimension to provide some idea of the wider significance of spirituality for Camphill Aberdeen. Due to the nature of the spiritual well-being scales that are currently available, and their emphasis on a particular mode of articulation and a level of intellectual engagement which the residents may have found difficult, we decided to develop this aspect of the study only with the co-workers and employees. The hope was that the information gained from this quantitative element could help us further understand and analyse the understandings and perspectives that were given to us in the focus groups with co-workers and employees. We acknowledge that there are problems with regards to excluding residents from this dimension of the study. However, the problem of text-oriented methods for qualitative and quantitative research with people who have learning disabilities has been noted as significant (Swinton and Powrie 2004). Within the confines of this small-scale study it was not possible for us to contemplate designing a simplified, more accessible version of the scale which could have been used with the residents. Consequently, we acknowledge that the exclusion of the residents from the quantitative dimension of the study is clearly a weakness, although one over which we had little control.

Problems with participation

In total, 217 co-workers and employees received the questionnaire and accompanying information pack. Seventy-four returned their consent forms

to the researcher, with 69 (32%) subsequently returning their questionnaires. While this was considered a poor return rate, we were advised by the statistician with whom we worked that it was a viable sample. It is our feeling that this poor return rate had to do with two factors:

1. Lack of time: The community can be quite busy, especially at the time of year when the data collection stage of this study took place. It may be that people simply found this another task for which they really did not have time.
2. Resistance to quantitative approach: A deeper reason may be the tension/conflict that some expressed in the attempt to tie spirituality down in neat terms that fitted a fixed questionnaire. It was expressed on several occasions that the spirituality of the community was not seen as being 'quantifiable' by the people in the community. Many said they had a hard time choosing a number to circle in answer to the questions on the SIBS; many added comments to their answer by way of explanation. One person suggested that the questionnaire would have to be quite different for her to fill it out.

Method

The Spiritual Involvement and Beliefs Scale (SIBS) developed by Hatch R. L. et al (Journal of Family Practice, 1998; 46:476-486) was utilised in this study. More precisely, the scales used were the revised versions of the scales initially tested in the reference quoted above, as per the document, "Progress on revision and validation of SIBS scale since 6/98 JFP article (update as of 8/2001)".

The revised version is a 39-item set of scales (referred to in this report as SIBS) as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1

1	Meditation and/or self-reflection
2	Meaning in times of hardship
3	Fulfilled without pursuing active spiritual life
4	Serenity by accepting things as they are
5	Experiences understood only thru spiritual beliefs
6	Do not believe in afterlife
7	Spiritual force influences events in my life
8	Relationship with someone I can turn to for spiritual guidance
9	Prayers do not really change what happens
10	Participating in spiritual activities helps me forgive other people
11	I find inner peace in harmony with nature
12	Everything happens for a greater purpose
13	I use contemplation to get in touch with my true self
14	Spiritual life fulfils me in ways material possessions do not
15	I rarely feel connected to something greater than myself
16	In times of despair, I can find little reason to hope
17	When I am sick, I would like others to pray for me
18	I have a personal relationship with a power greater than myself
19	I have had a spiritual experience that greatly changed my life
20	When I help others, I expect nothing in return
21	I don't take time to appreciate nature.
22	I depend on a higher power.
23	I have joy in my life because of my spirituality
24	My relationship with a higher power helps me love others more completely
25	Spiritual writings enrich my life
26	I have experienced healing after prayer
27	My spiritual understanding continues to grow
28	I am right more often than most people

29	Many spiritual approaches have little value
30	Spiritual health contributes to physical health
31	I regularly interact with others for spiritual purposes
32	Focus on what needs to be changed in me, not what needs to be changed in others
33	In difficult times, I am still grateful
34	Been through a time of great suffering that led to spiritual growth
35	When I wrong someone, I make an effort to apologize
36	I accept others as they are
37	I solve my problems without using spiritual resources
38	I examine my actions to see if they reflect my values
39	How spiritual a person do you consider yourself to be?

Each of these items was measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale with the following labels:

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Mildly Disagree;
4 = Neutral; 5 = Mildly Agree; 6 = Agree;
7 = Strongly Agree.

Nine of the thirty-nine items in Table 1 indicate a 'negative' direction of spiritual inclination and/or belief. These are items 3, 6, 9, 15, 16, 21, 28, 29, and 37(bolded in Tables 2). For example, a high score on such a 'negatively directed' item, for example item 15 ('I rarely feel connected to something greater than myself'), would indicate that the respondent does not display a strong spiritual consciousness. Hence, it would be expected that scores on the scales that have a 'positive' direction of spiritual inclination and /or belief (e.g. item 18) would be low for such a respondent.

Results

Average scores for the entire sample on the thirty-nine scales are shown in Table 2 below. The table displays the average score (mean), the standard deviation (SD), the minimum and maximum observed score (Min. and Max. respectively).

Table 2

	SIBS	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.
1	Meditation and/or self-reflection	5.86	1.44	2	7
2	Meaning in times of hardship	6.29	0.91	3	7
3	**Fulfilled without pursuing active spiritual life**	**4.39**	**1.81**	**1**	**7**
4	Serenity by accepting things as they are	4.77	1.58	2	7
5	Experiences understood only through spiritual beliefs	5.42	1.37	2	7
6	**Do not believe in afterlife**	**1.93**	**1.25**	**1**	**7**
7	Spiritual force influences events in my life	5.88	1.21	1	7
8	Relationship with someone I can turn to for spiritual guidance	5.19	1.61	1	7
9	**Prayers do not really change what happens**	**2.97**	**1.50**	**1**	**7**
10	Participating in spiritual activities helps me forgive other people	5.36	1.24	1	7
11	I find inner peace in harmony with nature	6.19	0.97	2	7
12	Everything happens for a greater purpose	5.60	1.40	1	7

	SIBS	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.
13	I use contemplation to get in touch with my true self	5.65	1.09	3	7
14	Spiritual life fulfils me in ways material possessions do not	5.98	1.06	2	7
15	**I rarely feel connected to something greater than myself**	**2.41**	**1.30**	**1**	**6**
16	**In times of despair, I can find little reason to hope**	**2.24**	**0.99**	**1**	**6**
17	When I am sick, I would like others to pray for me	4.65	1.42	2	7
18	I have a personal relationship with a power greater than myself	4.78	1.69	1	7
19	I have had a spiritual experience that greatly changed my life	4.80	1.84	1	7
20	When I help others, I expect nothing in return	5.07	1.39	2	7
21	**I don't take time to appreciate nature.**	**2.17**	**1.28**	**1**	**5**
22	I depend on a higher power.	4.29	1.79	1	7
23	I have joy in my life because of my spirituality	5.17	1.45	2	7
24	My relationship with a higher power helps me love others more completely	4.85	1.48	1	7
25	Spiritual writings enrich my life	5.72	1.40	1	7
26	I have experienced healing after prayer	3.67	1.41	1	7
27	My spiritual understanding continues to grow	6.14	1.19	1	7
28	**I am right more often than most people**	**2.57**	**1.23**	**1**	**5**

	SIBS	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.
29	**Many spiritual approaches have little value**	**2.37**	**1.16**	**1**	**5**
30	Spiritual health contributes to physical health	6.35	0.72	4	7
31	I regularly interact with others for spiritual purposes	5.06	1.40	2	7
32	Focus on what needs to be changed in me, not what needs to be changed in others	5.66	1.18	2	7
33	In difficult times, I am still grateful	5.33	1.24	2	7
34	Been through a time of great suffering that led to spiritual growth	4.84	1.76	1	7
35	When I wrong someone, I make an effort to apologize	5.88	0.78	4	7
36	I accept others as they are	5.15	0.79	3	7
37	**I solve my problems without using spiritual resources**	**3.69**	**1.23**	**1**	**7**
38	I examine my actions to see if they reflect my values	5.41	0.97	2	7
39	How spiritual a person do you consider yourself to be?	4.49	1.39	1	7

As can be seen, scores on all the positively directed items (non-bold) are generally more than four (i.e. neutral). This would imply that on the whole the workers at Camphill have a spiritual consciousness. This is supported by the average scores on the 'negatively' directed items (bold), which are all lower than four, with the exception of item 3 ('Fulfilled without pursuing active spiritual life'). This anomaly may indicate two possibilities. People who may have a strong spiritual inclination see fulfilment in others who do not pursue an active spiritual life and therefore are answering in a general way;

and individuals who may have spiritual beliefs and are fulfilled but may not necessarily perceive that they are pursuing a spiritual life.

The item with highest score is 'Spiritual health contributes to physical health' (item 30) at an average of 6.35, implying a considerably strong agreement. The limited variability (responses range from only 4 to 7), which produced the smallest standard deviation of 0.72, indicates consistency of agreement on this issue.

In contrast, the variable scoring the lowest is item 6 ('Do not believe in afterlife'), with a mean score of only 1.93. The majority of respondents have indicated strong disagreement on this statement.

Factor Analysis

In order to reduce the dimensionality of the data for the purposes of detecting any underlying structure to the SIBS scales, Factor Analyses were performed on both the 39-item variable set and the smaller 22-item (SIBS-R) set of the Spiritual Involvement and Beliefs Scale as detailed in "Progress on revision and validation of SIBS scale since 6/98 JFP article (update as of 8/2001)". In both cases, orthogonal varimax rotations were used in order to ease identification of structure and interpretation.

Results for SIBS

Initially a KMO test (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy) and a Bartlett's test of sphericity were obtained. The former was low (0.246) while the latter was significant, indicating that there may not be as much homogeneity in the underlying structure as in the analysis of Hatch et al, even though the data set technically is suitable for a factor analysis.

A simple reliability test was also performed to assess the overall suitability of the data for factor extraction. The data revealed a Cronbach's Alpha

coefficient of 0.833 for the overall set of thirty-nine scale items and a valid dataset of 43 cases. Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for each item deleted ranged from 0.82 to 0.85. While higher levels of these coefficients would have been preferable, the indications are that the data set may reveal some structure, although with some tentativeness.

Twenty-six (nearly 38%) of the sixty-nine cases could not be included in this analysis due to missing responses on some of the items. As a result, the following analyses must be treated with caution. Further investigation into reasons for this attrition is therefore highly recommended. Non-comprehension/ambiguity of the wording may be an obvious cause.

Factor analysis with extraction criterion of eigenvalues greater than 1.0, yielded a 10-factor structure. The percentages of variance claimed by the ten eigenvalues are as follows: 31.29, 9.51, 6.97, 5.70, 4.69, 4.26, 3.87, 3.68, 3.26, 2.66. As anticipated through the initial tests, this does not indicate a very harmonious or strong structure, and therefore may point to a certain degree of heterogeneity of the scales. In other words, scales that may on initial reading appear to be related may actually be indicative of distinct phenomena. Obvious cultural differences compared with the samples used by Hatch et al must be borne in mind.

Table 3 below shows the make-up of each factor in terms of the original items, after applying varimax rotations. Tick marks indicate those items that contribute significantly (loadings greater than 0.4).

Table 3

SIBS	**FACTOR**									
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**
I find inner peace in harmony with nature	✓									

SIBS	FACTOR									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
My spiritual understanding continues to grow	✓									✓
Spiritual life fulfils me in ways material possessions do not	✓									
Everything happens for a greater purpose	✓								✓	
Participating in spiritual activities helps me forgive other people	✓				✓					
I have joy in my life because of my spirituality	✓									
I depend on a higher power.	✓	✓								
How spiritual a person do you consider yourself to be?	✓		✓							
I use contemplation to get in touch with my true self	✓		✓		✓					
I have a personal relationship with a power greater than myself		✓								
When I am sick, I would like others to pray for me		✓								
I have experienced healing after prayer	✓	✓								
Prayers do not really change what happens		✓								
My relationship with a higher power helps me love others more completely	✓	✓								
Spiritual force influences events		✓							✓	

SIBS	FACTOR									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
in my life										
Spiritual writings enrich my life		✓		✓						
Many spiritual approaches have little value			✓							
I examine my actions to see if they reflect my values			✓							
In difficult times, I am still grateful			✓	✓						
Meditation and/or self-reflection		✓	✓							
Do not believe in afterlife										
When I wrong someone, I make an effort to apologize				✓						
I accept others as they are				✓						
Focus on what needs to be changed in me, not what needs to be changed in others			✓	✓						
Meaning in times of hardship										
I regularly interact with others for spiritual purposes	✓				✓					
Been through a time of great suffering that led to spiritiual growth		✓			✓	✓				
Experiences understood only thru spiritual beliefs					✓					
Relationship with someone I can turn to for spiritual guidance					✓					
Serenity by accepting things as they are						✓				
Fulfilled without pursuing active						✓				

SIBS	FACTOR									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
spiritual life										
I rarely feel connected to something greater than myself							✓			
In times of despair, I can find little reason to hope							✓			
I don't take time to appreciate nature.								✓		
I solve my problems without using spiritual resources								✓		
I have had a spiritual experience that greatly changed my life		✓						✓		
Spiritual health contributes to physical health									✓	
When I help others, I expect nothing in return				✓					✓	
I am right more often than most people										✓

Suggested labels for these ten factors are as follows:

Factor 1: Overall Spiritual Orientation

Factor 2: Particular spirituality involving Higher Power

Factor 3: Application (Internal)

Factor 4: Application (Ethical)

Factor 5: Application (Communal)

Factor 6: Perspective

Factor 7: Non-transcendent

Factor 8: Awareness

Factor 9: Understanding

Factor 10: Humility

Given the tentativeness of the results owing to reduced sample size, confidence as to whether these factors really indicate the phenomena suggested must be restricted to only the first few of the extracted factors (say, Factors 1 – 5).

Results for SIBS-R

On the reduced 22-item set of scales - as per the document "Progress on revision and validation of SIBS scale since 6/98 JFP article (update as of 8/2001)" – the initial diagnostics appear a little more favourable. KMO test increased significantly to 0.726 (compared with 0.246 for the 39-item analysis) suggesting that there is more hope for a defined structure. The resulting Factor Analysis suggested a 6-factor structure (extraction based on eigenvalues greater than 1.0). The percentage of variance accounted for by these six eigenvalues are 34.11, 11.40, 8.04, 6.82, 5.62, 4.66.

The loading of each of the original scale items on each factor is shown in the Table 4.

Table 4

SIBS-R	**FACTOR**					
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
My relationship with a higher power helps me love others more completely	✓					
I have a personal relationship with a power greater than myself	✓					
Prayers do not really change what happens	✓					
Meditation and/or self-reflection	✓					
I have experienced healing after prayer	✓		✓			
I have had a spiritual experience that greatly changed my life	✓					

SIBS-R	FACTOR					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
I have joy in my life because of my spirituality	✓					
How spiritual a person do you consider yourself to be?	✓		✓			
In difficult times, I am still grateful		✓				
I examine my actions to see if they reflect my values		✓				
Focus on what needs to be changed in me, not what needs to be changed in others		✓			✓	
When I help others, I expect nothing in return		✓				
My spiritual understanding continues to grow			✓			
Relationship with someone I can turn to for spiritual guidance			✓	✓		
Spiritual writings enrich my life			✓			
I don't take time to appreciate nature.				✓		
Meaning in times of hardship				✓		
I solve my problems without using spiritual resources	✓			✓		
Serenity by accepting things as they are					✓	
Been through a time of great suffering that led to spiritual growth	✓				✓	
Fulfilled without pursuing active spiritual life						✓
In times of despair, I can find little reason to hope		✓				✓

Suggested labels for these six factors are as follows:

Factor 1: Overall Spiritual Orientation (as before)

Factor 2: Application

Factor 3: Growth / Perspective

Factor 4: Coping

Factor 5: Acceptance / Insight

Factor 6: Fulfilment

Conclusion

In summary, there is evidence that most workers at Camphill Aberdeen have a spiritual orientation of some sort. There is considerable agreement in generalised statements such as in items 2, 11, 14, 27, and 30 of the SIBS scales. However, on particular spiritualities, such as one in relation to a Higher Power, the responses are mixed but better than neutral.

In terms of underlying structure, in addition to an overall indication of spirituality, there appears to be some evidence of a conscious application of one's spiritual beliefs, and coping with circumstances through one's spirituality. Due to data attrition, it has not been possible to establish the structural composition of the 39-item SIBS scale set conclusively. The reduced 22-item SIBS-R set indicates a basic six-factor structure to spirituality at Camphill Aberdeen. Further efforts to reduce data loss (perhaps through questionnaire clarity) may help confirm the nuances to the structure that are tentatively suggested in the above 39-item factor analysis.

For further information please contact:

Professor John Swinton
Professor in Practical Theology and Pastoral Care
School of Divinity, History and Philosophy
King's College
University of Aberdeen
ABERDEEN
AB24 3UB

T: 01224 273224
E: j.swinton@adbn.ac.uk
Centre for Spirituality, Health and Disability: www.abdn.ac.uk/cshad

Dr Aileen Falconer
Research Fellow
School of Divinity, History and Philosophy
King's College
University of Aberdeen
ABERDEEN
AB24 3UB

T: 01224 862728
E: a.falconer@crss.org.uk

Camphill Village Trust
The Honorary Secretary
The Old School House
Town Street
Old Malton
NORTH YORKSHIRE
YO17 7HD

T: 0845 0944638
E: office.cvtsec@camphill.org.uk
www.cvt.org.uk

Camphill Research Group
Dr Stefan Geider
Camphill Medical Practice Ltd
Murtle Estate
Bieldside
ABERDEEN
AB15 9EP

T: 01224 869833

E: s.geider@camphillmedical.org.uk
www.camphillmedical.org.uk