

## **Devon and Cornwall Gathering - March 5, 2016**

### **Notes**

#### **The decriminalisation of the possession, for personal use, of all drugs.**

The Devon and Cornwall Gathering took place on 5<sup>th</sup> April at the St. Austell Meeting House. Friends from as far as Torbay and North Devon and Penzance travelled to the Gathering and thirty Friends in all attended. Richard Lannowe-Hall from Marazion Meeting spoke to the Gathering about why he started the concern which was adopted by Cornwall Area Meeting. Danny Kushlick from Transform spoke to the Gathering about the work of Transform and why he founded the organisation. Tony Faragher from Wadebridge Meeting spoke about the decriminalisation of the possession of all drugs in Portugal. Lesley Chandler of Falmouth Meeting spoke about addiction in relation to childhood neglect, abuse and trauma. Voirrey Faragher of Wadebridge Meeting spoke to the Gathering of her hope for the way forward for the Concern.

In addition Friends played the 'you and me game' in which personal experiences of legal and illegal substances were discussed. Friends later contributed their thoughts and ideas through the 'silent conversation', writing their response to a number of significant questions. The Gathering closed with the 'Quaker Goodbye': a circle of interconnected hands as Friends spoke one word each which described the positive contribution they had personally made to the gathering.

It was an uplifting day.

## **Appendix**

### **Silent Conversation**

How do and how should, the issues of substance use connect with our spiritual life as Quakers?

*We can live adventurously and take action as well. Love.*

*Act to alleviate the causes.*

*All stories reveal the possibilities for leadings.*

*Realise that with a different life or different circumstances, it might have been your problem – there is no them and us.*

About two thirds of people in drug treatment have suffered childhood abuse or trauma. Given this, what should be our attitude to problem drug users?

*Understanding , not judgement.*

*Empathy and love.*

*Keep an open mind.*

*Campaign to re-introduce compassion as the driver for all public services and family life.*

*Action to provide early childhood /family support, understanding and ongoing support as necessary.*

*How do we raise awareness of underlying issues and try to break the chains of abuse?*

*Start with the now, not the past.*

*More counselling services needed – free.*

*sympathy empathy help*

*Monitoring children's well-being / mental health from an early age. Drug use is often a symptom of abuse.*

*Tolerance, compassion, acceptance – LOVE.*

*Treat them as you would a member of your family (unless you are an abuser).*

“In view of the harm done by the use of alcohol, tobacco and other habit-forming drugs, consider whether you should limit your use of them or refrain from using them altogether. Remember that any use of alcohol or drugs may impair judgement and put both the user and others in danger.”  
Advices and Queries:40) Is this statement still adequate? If not, how might the statement be improved?

*I like the statement.*

*All drug use has benefits and costs. Suggest we review these with regard to the drugs we use.*

*Might be extended to suggest a personal examination of all our habitual behaviour.*

*The lack of prescription is important.*

*Yes.*

*Old fashioned ? ? this day and age.*

*Google ALICE-RAP and health footprint.*

*Last word, 'danger' could change?*

*The focus is ideally on the harm – rather than the substance.*

*Taking personal responsibility is the antidote to addiction so YES.*

*The statement appears to apply to Friends – what about everyone else?*

*...harm done, to yourself and others, .....*

*How can we most effectively encourage Friends in other parts of Britain to engage with Cornwall's Concern?*

*Emphasise the involvement and damage caused by organised crime.*

*One could use social media.*

*Note! it's about PEOPLE. TALK . Use The Friend paper.*

*It is by meeting with other Friends that we can best lead them to our viewpoint. We need opportunities to do this at various times and places.*

*Take the message to them.*

*Emphasise how immoral it is to criminalise people who are in pain, distress, marginalised!*

*Listen to their objections – and respond truthfully and skilfully to them.*

*Facebook?*

*Share stories of hope, of possibility, so we can see more tools than the hammer.*

*Compile a collection of personal stories (ef Quakers in Criminal Justice).*

*(?) reports on what is being discussed here today – in THE FRIEND – would keep it in the forefront of other Quakers – let's keep on plugging it.*

*The article in the recent 'Friend' is a great start – build actively on dialogue arising.*

*Keep talking – truth to power.*

*Listen to one another with love.*

*Educate and de-mystify. GIVE THE TRUE FACTS. AN OPEN FORUM.*

*Show willingness to listen to and acceptance of other people's views whilst giving them the opportunity to understand ours.*

*Bridges. Silent conversations. Role play where participants act the opposite of their beliefs. Revision of Quaker faith & practice - threshing division. Allow sufficient time for paradigm to change.*

Friends hold a wide range of views about substance use. Sometimes these views seem to be in opposition with each other. How can we build bridges between views and people?

*Focus on the harm the substance causes, not solely its use.*

*Personal stories carry more weight than stats – share them.*

*Our ideas need to be shared on a one-to-one basis and progress in short stages. We should take a step at a time and not rush others into agreement that they do not feel ready yet to accept.*

*keep talking.*

*Ensure views are based on understanding – education, without judgement, is vital.*