

Minute - Devon and Cornwall Quaker Gathering
Quaker House, Plymouth
Saturday October 8th 2011

27 Friends are present
Bob Lovett is Clerk
Alan Ray-Jones is appointed Elder

Felicity Kaal, one of the winners in the Friends Quarterly Essay competition on "The Future of Quakers in Britain" spoke to the Gathering and led the day's activities. Her talk focussed on the need for us to rediscover our spiritual activism and return to the willingness with which George Fox and early Friends were prepared to speak about their spiritual lives.

She encapsulated the core of Quaker spirituality in the following sentence:

"Through a process of continuous and continual discernment we open ourselves to the inward light to reveal our darkness, and allow it to transform us, and then go out and act in the world from that place"

Using the four tenets of liberal Quakerism developed by Rufus Jones and John Wilhelm Rowntree, viz,

experience is primary
progressive revelation
open to new light,
faith relevant to the times,

she argued that we are, and have been for 100 years, a truly post modern religion in which our perceptions of the world are conditioned by personal experiences and the language we use to describe them. Difficulties arise because we have lost our spiritual centre, use different "languages" to describe our spiritual experiences, and fail to engage in discussions through which translation and understanding can take place.

It is important for us to encourage growth in Quakerism because:

there is an enormous spiritual hunger in the world
we are under an obligation to be truthful
because we need to be able to explain to enquirers who we are and what we do
we already have the three concepts of God within our diverse membership
the individual 1st person God - God immanent
the 2nd person God - the transcendent God, the divine "Thou"
the third person God - the God of the natural world and the "Web of Life"

In the afternoon we engaged in a series of discussion workshops exploring the "safe" use of language in describing our varying and different spiritual experiences.

We are grateful to Felicity for leading us in an inspiring day. We will return to our Meetings with a renewed sense of spiritual vigour and a willingness to put our plans of action in place.

We are also grateful to our Plymouth Friends for their hospitality.

We depart in the hope to meet again in St Austell on February 11th when Paul Parker, our Recording Clerk, will give us his ideas on "Quakers in Britain in the 21st Century"

Bob Lovett,
Clerk