

Testimony on Restorative Justice

This testimony was initially drafted at the last meeting, but had been unintentionally left out from the article on Restorative Justice in the last edition of the New England Friend. In the meantime we see need for minor modification and approve the following text:

TESTIMONY ON RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

As Members of the Religious Society of Friends, we believe that God is leading us to live out the testimony of restorative justice, justice without retribution and without vengeance. Restorative justice has as its primary aim the healing of all parties in any conflict--whether familial, civil, criminal, racial, or international. It is justice based on unconditional love and forgiveness--love of victims and offenders equally.

In our peace testimony we affirm that Jesus taught us to love our enemies. As Friends we believe that there is that of God in every person and that through the power of God, we can transform the evil of violence into peaceful goodwill.

When, however, the peace is broken, conflict between persons often leads to harm and injury. Whenever infractions occur, restorative justice must focus on meeting the needs of all participants. Victims need to feel support from others, to experience justice, to seek restitution and to grant forgiveness. Offenders need to experience justice, to repent and apologize, to make restitution and to be forgiven. Communities need to create the conditions in which both victims and offenders can agree, heal and be restored to wholeness.

Restorative justice requires that we all hold one another accountable for our actions and the consequences of our actions. Society has a legitimate right to public safety and protection from violence; however, protective measures including restraint must always be applied humanely and only for as long as necessary.

Restorative justice is not what most of us call "justice" at present. Few families and few governments attempt to live without punishing those who have harmed them. We Friends in New England believe that God is calling us to renew our traditional concern for those in prison and to challenge our criminal justice systems to act in a radically different way.

We ask God's spirit to lead us in our efforts to abandon punishment and retribution, and to help us embrace true justice that restores friendship and transforms creation.

*Westport Monthly Meeting approved the sense of this
minute. Fourth Month twenty first day 1996.*