

BYM MARRIAGE AND WELCOMING MINUTES
COMPILED MARCH 2011
ALPHABETICAL ORDER

INTRODUCTION

Below is a collection of minutes and letters about same-sex marriage and other gender and sexual diversity concerns from various Meetings and committees within Baltimore Yearly Meeting. This collection represents an updating of the 2004 collection compiled by the Ad-Hoc Committee on Gender and Sexual Diversity Concerns, which itself was an updating of that committee's earlier collection. Added in this 2010 collection are minutes or letters from Bethesda MM (1996), Alexandria MM (2004), Gunpowder MM (2006), Baltimore-Stony Run MM (2006 and 2007), Baltimore-Homewood MM (2007), Maury River MM (2008), Patapsco MM (2006 and 2009), Pipe Creek MM (2009), Floyd MM (2010), Hopewell Centre MM (2010), Langley Hill MM (2010), Menallen MM (2010), Patuxent MM (2010), Roanoke MM (2010); the Baltimore Yearly Meeting Young Adult Friends (2007) and Ad-Hoc Committee on Gender and Sexual Diversity Concerns (2009); Baltimore Yearly Meeting and its Representative/Interim Meeting (Y2000, Minute #26; R2000, Minute #36; I2005, Minutes #14 and 29); and Friends General Conference Central Committee (2004). We expect that we are missing some minutes and welcome additions/corrections (contact us at BYMgsdc@gmail.com or via the Baltimore Yearly Meeting office at 301-774-7663).

This collection does not include any of the minutes written about Baltimore Yearly Meeting's relationship with Friends United Meeting (FUM) or about FUM's personnel policy. Many of those minutes are available at <http://www.bym-rsf.org/quakers/FUMpolicy/FUMConcern.shtml>.

We have organized these minutes in two ways: alphabetically by monthly meeting and chronologically. Many of the minutes were written between 1997 and 2002 in response to Alexandria's and Stony Run's proposed changes to Appendix F of BYM Faith and Practice and/or Virginia Half-Years' minute on support for both Quaker and civil same-sex marriages; those minutes may be found at pages 4, 6, and 23, respectively. To date, Baltimore Yearly Meeting has not united with either of these proposals. Many of the more recent minutes are written in response to Friends General Conference Central Committee's minute on the gifts and spirit-guided leadership of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer Friends (p 27) or the BYM Ad-Hoc Committee on Gender and Sexual Diversity Concerns' 2009 query about Meetings' cooperation with state marriage policies (p 24).

- Baltimore Yearly Meeting Ad-Hoc Committee on Gender and Sexual Diversity Concerns, March 2011

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I. MINUTES FROM MONTHLY, INDULGED AND PREPARATIVE MEETINGS

ADELPHI MONTHLY MEETING

Adelphi, Maryland

Minute May 12, 1991

Our understanding of the spirit of Christ, reflected in the Gospels, leads us to affirm one another and our loving responsible relationships. To do so strengthens our community, opens us to the full richness of the diverse loving relationships in our Meeting, and gives persons in such relationships the support of a loving community.

We accept and appreciate diversity in our community and welcome all who share our search for Truth. Just as a marriage between a man and a woman may provide mutual nurture to both the couple and the Meeting, committed same-gender relationships may also be a source of spiritual growth. We recognize the Light in all sincere, loving, supportive relationships, which are characterized by growth and in which faith, hope, love and truth abide.

Upon request by a couple, Adelphi Friends Meeting will recognize same-gender relationships through the same careful process we customarily use to arrive at clearness for all couples who wish to unite under our care. We consider the obligations undertaken in these relationships by both the couple and the Meeting to be those of marriage. We expect the couple to become each other's next of kin, to care of one another and for any children brought into the union, and to share equitably their worldly goods. The oversight committee will work with the couple in securing appropriate legal arrangements to protect the relationship.

We recognize our responsibility to provide continuing nurture to all unions under the care of the Meeting. Jesus calls us to a life of love.

Excerpts from Pamphlet

Chronology

“On May 12, 1991, Adelphi Friends Meeting approved the attached minute on lesbian and gay relationships that reflects a long process of discerning the leading of our Meeting community.

“We tried to keep the practice of love inspired by Jesus as the basis for considering this concern. Our process consisted of many small steps which contributed to create a safe space for seeking ‘our center’.

“Our initial consideration of this topic began almost a decade ago. Since that time, this consideration has gone through what could be viewed as four stages. First, the Meeting considered this concern and then laid it aside. Then, five or six years later, a dialogue was opened on the concern and peoples’ views and feelings were expressed. Third, an effort was made to learn more about the concern. Last, the Meeting considered a minute on the concern...

“The draft minute evolved over time as it was considered by the Committees and many members of the Meeting community. Queries on the concern were prepared to assist Meeting at the request of the committees. The draft minute was brought to Meeting for Worship for the Conduct of Business and then held in the Light at a Second Hour worship sharing. Several months later, a Second Hour of a small group discussion offered an opportunity to raise concerns about the minute. A number of potluck dinners on the minute were held in people’s homes among smaller groups...During the entire process, progress was regularly discussed at Meeting for Worship for the Conduct of Business...

“We at Adelphi Friends feel fortunate that the force of love blessed us with circumstances that allowed us to discern a patient path for reaching unity on this concern.” Prepared by the Pastoral Care Committee, November 1991.

ALEXANDRIA MONTHLY MEETING

Woodlawn, Virginia

Letter to Baltimore Yearly Meeting Friends July 17, 1999

Dear Friends,

Meeting on the 6th day of 6th month, Alexandria Monthly Meeting at Woodlawn urged Baltimore Yearly Meeting to consider a concern regarding the language used in Faith and Practice to discuss marriage.

Friends are advised on page 20 of Faith and Practice that marriage is “undertaken with divine assistance solemnized in God’s presence, is a creative and joyful relationship. When two people make their vows to each other in the presence of God and their friends, they take each other as life-long partners, promising with divine assistance to be faithful to each other. Implicit in their covenant for life is a commitment to resolve, with God’s help, the problems and disagreements that arise from living together.”

Alexandria Friends celebrate the non-gender-specific and inclusive language reflected in this passage. We note with concern, however, that Appendix F of Faith and Practice is (unwittingly, perhaps) less inclusive. As an example, the terms “husband” and “wife” appear throughout the text, terms that seemingly exclude non-traditional (e.g., gay or lesbian) unions. Alexandria Friends urges Baltimore Yearly Meeting to prayerfully consider adopting consistent, non-gender-specific language regarding marriage throughout Faith and Practice. (from Philip T. Johnson, Clerk)

Minute June 16, 2004

Our experience has been that spiritual gifts are not distributed with regard to sexual orientation or gender identity. Our experience has been that Alexandria Monthly Meeting has been immeasurably enriched over the years by the full participation and Spirit-guided leadership of Friends of all sexual orientations and gender identities. We will continue to listen to and honor those voices and gifts.

We believe it is inconsistent with God’s Truth to silence the voices of Friends based on whom and how they love. Our experience confirms that we are all equal before God, as God made us, and feel blessed to be engaged in the work of Alexandria Monthly Meeting together.

Minute October, 2004

We are convinced that faithful, loving, committed relationships, whether same-sex or heterosexual, give evidence of divine guidance and support. Quakers hold that marriage is the Lord’s work, and we are but witnesses. We in Alexandria Monthly Meeting affirm our willingness to hold under the care of our meeting same-sex as well as heterosexual marriages among our members and attenders. (via FLGBTQC collection)

ANNAPOLIS MONTHLY MEETING

Annapolis, Maryland

Minute February 6, 1994.

Annapolis Friends Meeting, the Quaker Meeting in Annapolis, support House Bill 192 that prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation with regard to public accommodations, housing and employment.

Quakers hold as the basis of their faith the belief that God endows each human being with a measure of the Divine Spirit. Those who lead their lives in strict obedience to God’s will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone. This “speaking to” or “listening to” that of God in everyone, has led us over the last three hundred years to public witness on many urgent social concerns such as the end of slavery, women’s suffrage, Native American issues and civil rights for all.

Some employers, such as the American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker service organization, have specific employment policies in place banning discrimination against gays. Most employers do not have such a policy and this leaves no

recourse at all for people unjustly dismissed from their jobs.

Our vision of a just society includes people living their lives without fear of discrimination based on who they are and whom they love.

Minute March, 1995

Friends approve, in principle, ceremonies of commitment for same sex couples. We affirm the goodness of committed loving relationships and offer recognition and support to those who share this ideal and desire to enter into a permanent relationship based upon it. (Friends still need to clarify what “under the care of the meeting” means for marriage and ceremonies of commitment.)

BALTIMORE MONTHLY MEETING (HOMEWOOD)

Baltimore, Maryland

Minute August 1985

Baltimore Monthly Meeting [Homewood] wants to provide homosexual couples the same corporate recognition and loving support of their commitment that we provide heterosexual couples in marriage. Celebrations of Commitment to be held under the care of the Meeting will be available to homosexual couples who are in the Meeting upon Ministry and Counsel and the Monthly Meeting finding clearness. (A note was added in the Monthly Meeting Minutes that an ongoing effort will be made for education and understanding among people of the Meeting.)

Minute January 21, 1990

- 1) The same term, marriage, will be utilized to designate the celebrations of commitment for both heterosexual and homosexual couples.
- 2) The procedure for marriage under the care of the Meeting outlined in Faith and Practice shall be followed for all couples seeking clearness for marriage under the care of the Meeting. Ministry and Counsel is asked to recommend a series of queries for all couples regarding such topics as legal commitments, guardianship of children/parents, and inheritance issues.
- 3) The Meeting looks forward to the day when all married couples will enjoy the full range of civil privileges and social acceptance.
- 4) The Meeting takes seriously its commitment to couples under its care, and it encourages them to turn to the Meeting for support and counsel.

Minute February 18, 2007

Nancy Clark from the Baltimore Yearly Meeting’s ad hoc committee on Gender and Sexual Diversity Concerns brought a minute drafted by the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, and Queer Committee of the Friends General Conference [see p 27]. We were asked to speak out of silence on the minute and on the impact of gender and sexual diversity on the Homewood Meeting community. Several people spoke in support of the minute, stressing their appreciation of richness brought to our spiritual life by the diversity in our Meeting. Some spoke of our history as a meeting and our hope to join other Meetings in the “circle of acceptance.” Others spoke of their appreciation for the impact of our diversity on our children. One reminded us to look inward and be aware of ways that we may all have negative internal attitudes which need addressing. Nancy Clark agreed to bring our reflections on the minute back to the committee.

BALTIMORE MONTHLY MEETING (STONY RUN)

Baltimore, Maryland

Minutes as printed in “Marriage and Meeting for Committees” Pamphlet May 3, 1994

(Statements which reflect current practice were approved, including the following.) Couples, one or both of whom are members of the Religious Society of Friends or who are regular attenders, may be married at Baltimore Monthly Meeting of Friends, Stony Run, under the care of the Meeting.

(Part II of the pamphlet is following.) We had extensive worship and discussion around the subject of commitment by people of the same gender. We see our role as including the nurture of everyone in the Meeting community, regardless of sexual orientation. At the same time, we seek to nurture those who are uncomfortable with a public commitment by people of the same gender.

We found readiness within our committee to recognize love between peoples of the same gender. We recommend that Baltimore Monthly Meeting of Friends, Stony Run, hold Meetings for Worship for Commitment, if requested to do so.

Couples, one or both of whom are members of the Religious Society of Friends or who are regular attenders here may have a Meeting for Worship for Commitment at Baltimore Monthly Meeting of Friends, Stony Run, under the care of the Meeting. We recognize that at present there is no process in law to accomplish a marriage. (Approved by Monthly Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business.)

Excerpt from Proposed Revisions to BYM Faith and Practice May 2, 2000

(The Appendix F of Faith and Practice would change to read as follows, additions shown in italics.)

F. The Marriage or Ceremony of Commitment under the Care of the Monthly Meeting”

1. Questions to be Considered by the Couple before Application to the Monthly Meeting for Marriage or Ceremony of Commitment under its Care

Committed or covenanted relationships, as acknowledged in ceremonies of marriage or committees are solemn in obligation and fundamental in social significance...

Minute June 2006

June 06 - 4 - Proposed revised marriage policy (ccc committee) - Friends approved this change [revised policy below], discussed at the May Monthly Meeting. A Friend expressed his pleasure that this issue, often so controversial elsewhere, has encountered no controversy here.

POLICY AND PROCEDURES STATEMENT REGARDING MARRIAGE UNDER THE CARE OF THE MEETING

INTRODUCTION

On May 3, 1994, the Overseers Committee (now Community, Care and Clearness Committee) of Stony Run brought to the Monthly Meeting for Business a policy and procedures statement regarding marriage under the care of the Meeting. At that time, the Meeting approved a statement that outlined our practices regarding marriage under the care of Stony Run with the addition of Meeting for Worship for Commitment of same sex couples. The Meeting policies and procedures were the same for both same gender and opposite gender couples; only the name of the event was different.

At that time, the committee and the Meeting, in their approval of the policy statement, recognized and approved that “we see our role as including the nurture of everyone in the Meeting community, regardless of sexual orientation” and “we found readiness within our committee to recognize love between people of the same gender.”

We believe these statements continue to be true. Further, we have been led to seek one practice for the union of committed couples under the care of the Meeting. We affirm Baltimore Yearly Meeting’s 1988 Faith and Practice, which states that “Marriage is regarded by Friends as a spiritual commitment, a solemn covenant made in the presence of God and the Meeting.” We find nothing in this statement that would prevent us from witnessing the vows and solemnizing the covenant made by a same-gender couple.

With these thoughts in mind, we ask that the Meeting approve the following policy and practice:

It is fundamental to the faith and practice of the Religious Society of Friends that we honor the equality and integrity of all human beings.

We affirm the words of the 1988 Faith and Practice of Baltimore Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, which states that, "Marriage is regarded by Friends as a spiritual commitment, a solemn covenant made in the presence of God and the Meeting."

Through our faith in the continuing revelation of Truth, we are led to practice a single standard for those committed couples who wish their union to be recognized formally under the care of the Meeting.

We affirm our testimony of Equality that requires the same rights, privileges and responsibilities for all couples united under the care of the Meeting.

It is our practice that: couples, one or both of whom are members of the Religious Society of Friends or who are regular attenders, may have their union formally recognized under the care of Baltimore Monthly Meeting of Friends, Stony Run.

When a couple wishes to have their union formally recognized at Stony Run, under the care of the Meeting:

The couple should notify Community, Care & Clearness committee at least four months prior to the requested date of the wedding.

A committee for clearness will meet with the couple one or more times, at least three months prior to the proposed wedding.

Divorced persons will be asked to assure the committee of clearness that the divorce papers have been properly filed.

The term "under the care of the Meeting" implies a long-term relationship with, and nurturing of, the couple. A committee of oversight, as opposed to a committee of clearness, has continued responsibility for the nurturing of this relationship.

Couples not directly connected with the Meeting, but who are related to Friends School as faculty, or former student, or are related to other Friends organizations, may be wed in the Meetinghouse by making arrangements with a clergy person or public official of their choosing.

Report from Community, Care and Clearness Committee June 2007

THE RESPONSE OF BALTIMORE MONTHLY MEETING OF FRIENDS, STONY RUN to Interim Meeting of Baltimore Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends on the Minute from the Executive Committee of Friends General Conference IN SUPPORT OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND QUEER FRIENDS.

Stony Run Meeting's journey to fully embrace lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer Friends began in earnest in the mid-1980s when we struggled to find clearness and approval for ceremonies of commitment under the care of the Meeting for same gender couples. Meeting members with gay and lesbian children were deeply hurt by some Friends' resistance to extending the Society's testimony of equality to homosexuals. In the course of our seeking clearness, some members withdrew from Meeting while others, though wounded, stayed in the community as we continued our search for Truth.

Under the stewardship of an ad hoc committee on sexuality and marriage, the Meeting community went through a time of seeking, education, and threshing. During this time, the Meeting hired an openly gay man to fill the position of Executive Secretary. His experience, knowledge and presence were assets as Stony Run Friends continued the dialogue. Upon his retirement in 2002, Monthly Meeting found way clear to employ another openly gay man in the position. The Meeting has benefited from the gifts of both of these men.

The positive experiences of Homewood Meeting, as they celebrated ceremonies of commitment for same gender couples, were helpful as Stony Run searched for clearness. Our understanding was further enriched by the participation of lesbian families in Meeting for Worship and First Day School. We also had opportunities to get to know other gay and lesbian F/ friends as they joined in worship and service in the Stony Run community.

At Monthly Meeting, May 1994, a “Marriage and Meeting for Commitment” minute was approved, which allowed the joining of same gender couples under the care of the Meeting. Ten years later, challenged by our Peace and Social Order Committee and the movement within the national gay and lesbian community to achieve legislative changes in marital laws to guarantee equal rights for all, our Community, Care and Clearness Committee (CCC) reviewed and revised our earlier marriage minute so that it makes no distinction based on gender. This minute was approved at the May 2006 Monthly Meeting for Business.

Since October 2004, two Stony Run members have been working on a special committee of Baltimore Yearly Meeting (BYM) to bring forth a proposal for action on the issue of Friends United Meeting (FUM) funding. The question of funding arose from Stony Run’s deep concern about FUM’s personnel policy, which affects employees and volunteers. The current policy is discriminatory, as it does not allow full participation in the activities of the Religious Society of Friends by active gay and lesbian Friends or others who are in relationships outside the bonds of marriage, which is defined as being between one man and one woman.

Interim Meeting asked its constituent Monthly Meetings to respond to the following Minute from the Executive Committee of Friends General Conference, which reads [see full minute on p 27].

Stony Run Monthly Meeting decided to ask CCC committee to season this request. As a first step, the committee chose to hold a forum in December 2006 to which members of BYM’s Ad hoc Committee on Gender and Sexual Diversity Concerns were invited. Our guests provided us with the history and progress of the FGC minute as well as helpful information about FGC’s Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Concerns and about related activities within our own Yearly Meeting. [Editor’s note: FLGBTQC is not affiliated with FGC.]

In this forum, we learned that some Friends, heterosexual and homosexual, have varying degrees of discomfort and concern with the use of the term “queer.” These F/friends recalled the hateful contexts in which “queer” had been and continues to be used and see the word as pejorative, inflammatory and/or politically charged. Nevertheless, most F/friends respect the right of a Friend or person to self-identify as queer. We seek to know, accept, support and work with each other regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Echoing the words of FGC’s Minute, we, at Stony Run Monthly Meeting, affirm that spiritual gifts are not distributed with regard to sexual orientation or gender identity; we affirm that we are all equal before God and we feel blessed to be engaged together in the work of the Religious Society of Friends.

BETHESDA MONTHLY MEETING

Bethesda, Maryland

Minute on Inclusiveness January, 1996

As members of the Religious Society of Friends, we believe there is that of God in each of us, and that we are joined together in the spirit of love. We warmly welcome into the active life of our Meeting all those who share these beliefs.

Bethesda Friends Meeting affirms the historical commitment of Friends to all seekers, regardless of race, national origin, gender or other personal characteristics. We now join those Friends who feel called to specify sexual orientation as one of these characteristics.

In Faith and Practice, Baltimore Yearly Meeting recognizes that our Meeting community includes “persons living alone, two parent families, single parent families, married and unmarried couples, homosexual and heterosexual couples, single adults or extended families sharing a household, and larger communal groups.” (p.18, 1998) This diversity in our midst offers us both strength and vitality as a community.

The Meeting reaffirms its continuing responsibility to welcome all seekers. We are committed to strengthening our capacity to understand, nurture, support and value this diversity within our Meeting family.

Marriage Minute December 1, 1996

Bethesda Friends Meeting is committed to giving its loving support to all couples who seek clearness and Divine guidance as they consider the solemn act of entering into a life-long commitment to each other in the presence of God and the Meeting. Our support is in part manifested by the appointment of a Committee for Clearness to meet with the couple in a spirit of loving concern to consider honestly and frankly the duties and responsibilities they propose to assume. This support continues as their commitment is solemnized in the Meeting for Worship. Thereafter, as couples encounter opportunities for growth and challenges in their spiritual journeys, we offer our continued support and hope that they will draw on the wisdom and strength of the Meeting, at the same time that the Meeting is enriched by their presence.

Since its establishment, Bethesda Friends Meeting has followed this process for marriages under its care. As same-sex couples have begun publicly to declare and celebrate their relationships, we recognize the need to include such relationships in our loving care. Couples of the same gender, who face particular difficulties in a less than accepting world, require a special measure of our continuing support. Bethesda Friends Meeting wishes to record that we accept such unions with the same expectations of seriousness and life-long commitment, applying the same procedures and standards for clearness and oversight, as we do for other couples.

BLACKSBURG MONTHLY MEETING

Eggleston, Virginia

Excerpt from a letter to Yearly Meeting Clerk October, 1999

“We at Blacksburg MM see the topic of same gender marriage as important for consideration among Friends, and the prayerful discernment process involved in finding unity on it as an opportunity for important growth in spiritual groundedness and understanding among us.” At the time of this letter, Blacksburg Friends reported, “We have only begun to address it (the matter of same gender marriages).”

CARLISLE MONTHLY MEETING

Carlisle, Pennsylvania

Minute July 9, 2000

Carlisle Monthly Meeting has considered Charlottesville’s Minute but has not yet come to unity on same-sex marriage/union.

CHARLOTTESVILLE MONTHLY MEETING

Charlottesville, Virginia

Minute June 3, 1990

The consensus of this committee is that a couple of the same sex requesting marriage under the care of the Meeting should proceed in the usual manner, that is: request a clearness committee, and that we ought to trust in this process as we do ordinarily. (This was a statement brought to Monthly Meeting by the Ministry and Worship committee and was “reaffirmed as a minute of the Monthly Meeting”.)

Minute on Same-Gender Marriage November 2, 1997

Charlottesville Friends recognize marriages to affirm lifelong commitments, to support families, and to strengthen our spiritual community. It is fundamental to Quaker faith and practice that we honor the equality and integrity of all human beings and affirm individuals in their leadings. Therefore, we find it consistent with Quakers’ historical faith and testimonies that we practice a single standard of treatment for all couples who wish to marry.

Charlottesville Meeting has traditionally celebrated committed unions as marriages under the care of the Meeting. We offer the same loving care and consideration to all couples without regard to gender.

Minutes and Other Actions on Same Gender Marriage

Gay and lesbian Friends and couples bless our Meeting. Their gifts of courage, love, and devotion speak to us of God, and move us closer to that of God within us all. We offer our experience of these gifts to other Meetings as they seek the Light on this issue.

The state offers legal recognition of opposite-sex marriages and extends significant privileges to couples who legally marry. We believe a commitment to equality requires that same-sex couples be offered those same rights and privileges, and we resolve to work toward that end.

(The Ad Hoc Committee on Marriage Rights further reported that it plans “listening sessions” for any who wish to discuss this issues further.)

DEER CREEK MONTHLY MEETING

Darlington, Maryland

Excerpt from letter to Frank Massey May 16, 2000

“Deer Creek Friends Meeting has considered the issue of same gender marriage as requested to do so by the Yearly Meeting. This has been done. Ministry and Oversight wishes to report that the Meeting gave the issue careful and prayerful consideration and was almost amazed to discover the range of diversity within our membership concerning same sex marriage. At this time, however, no consensus has been reached.”

DUNNINGS CREEK MONTHLY MEETING

Fishertown, Pennsylvania

Minute April 2, 2000

We believe in human equality. We believe “there is that of God in every one.” It is not our place to judge which persons constitute a couple, or the sexual preference of that couple. The *quality of the relationship and the spiritual commitment to marriage* is our concern.

FISHERTOWN MONTHLY MEETING

Fishertown, Pennsylvania

Letter November 26, 1999

The members of Fishertown are not in unity with Virginia Half Years Meeting in the concern for Same Sex marriage rights.

FLOYD MONTHLY MEETING

Floyd, Virginia

Minute February 14, 1999

Acknowledging our testimony concerning the Light within every one, Floyd Monthly Meeting extends its loving care and support to all people, regardless of sexual orientation. We recognize and respect committed relationships centered in love. We are open to celebrating marriage and covenants of commitment regardless of gender. We will follow the procedures specified by the Baltimore Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice for Marriage Under the Care of the Meeting.

Letter to the Ad-Hoc Committee on Gender and Sexual Diversity Concerns July 2010

After considering the query from the Ad Hoc Committee on Gender and Sexual Diversity Concerns at seven consecutive Meetings for Business, Floyd Friends Meeting’s response is:

1. We strongly affirm the equal right of same gender couples to marry.

2. We re-confirm our willingness to conduct religious marriages for same gender couples under the same policies as for opposite gender couples.
3. We desire to witness to our belief in marriage equality and work toward integrity by making civil marriage available to everyone.

However, we found that the query raised several questions which were not resolved in unity:

1. Should church and state ever conduct joint activities?
2. Is refusing to sign marriage licenses an effective protest against unequal government treatment of same gender couples?
3. How are we living with integrity if we refuse to sign marriage licenses yet encourage some to obtain them?

We do not want to let these questions stop us from working toward integrity and equality in our policies and actions. So, we have formed a small working group that will continue to consider actions and bring recommendations back to the Meeting in order to shape a unified testimony.

We suggest that there are other issues which your committee might consider. Faced as we are with a situation of inequality enforced by most governments, what are the actions that Baltimore Yearly Meeting and its affiliated monthly meetings could take to create change at that level? Would it be useful to query meetings on how they make same gender couples feel included and equal, and/or provide guidance on how to do so?

FREDERICK MONTHLY MEETING

Frederick, Maryland

Excerpt from Monthly Meeting Newsletter May, 2000

“(We)...held a threshing session regarding a same-sex marriage minute at the request of Meeting...a range of comments were elicited with a concern that we proceed with care...We also encourage individuals to bring their thoughts forward to M&C as we prayerfully consider this matter.”

Minute 2003

“Frederick Monthly Meeting extends its full welcome to all people without regard to sexual orientation. The Meeting affirms its support of witnessing to marriages between couples of the same sex who are found clear to marry under the care of the Meeting.”

GETTYSBURG MONTHLY MEETING

Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

Minute as stated in a letter October 21, 1999

Gettysburg Friends have always felt that all couples, regardless of gender, requesting to be married under the care of this Meeting be treated with the same loving care. The first paragraph of the minute from Charlottesville Meeting was recognized as being consistent with our views. Our Meeting preferred the wording suggested by the Chesapeake Quarterly Meeting.

Minute as stated in Spiritual State of the Meeting Report 2006

Gettysburg Monthly Meeting is totally opposed to discrimination against any person whatsoever. Friend’s spiritual gifts lead to all Friends spiritual needs. We support the FGC Central Committee minute [see p 27 for text of minute].

GOOSE CREEK MONTHLY MEETING

Lincoln, Virginia

Minute June 1, 2003

In the case of same-gender couples, Goose Creek Friends Meeting will consider a request from any member of Meeting for a commitment ceremony under the spiritual care of the meeting.

GUNPOWDER MONTHLY MEETING

Sparks, Maryland

Minute May 1, 2010

We understand marriage to represent both a sacred and a legal commitment between two people.

Our experience affirms that sacred marriage is a commitment grounded in and nurtured by God's love for two people and that, in accordance with our Quaker testimony of equality, "that of God" is present in every person. Members of a meeting community serve as loving witnesses to and supporters of a sacred marriage. The process of clearness for sacred marriage provides both the couple entering into marriage and the meeting community an opportunity to reflect on and discern readiness for this commitment.

While some of us sustain a traditional understanding of sacred marriage as between a man and a woman, many of us recognize that two people of the same gender can enter into sacred marriage. Life in our Gunpowder community has given us the gift of knowing that both same gender couples and different gender couples can nurture the loving commitment to one another and to their children that is at the heart of a sacred marriage. We are not, however, in unity on whether we would be clear to support a same gender couple's sacred marriage. We must trust, therefore, that when God calls us to support the process of clearness for marriage for a same gender couple, we will faithfully engage the listening and waiting that leads us to affirm any couple's clearness for sacred marriage. It is God alone who can help us to discern such clearness.

We also recognize that the legal climate for marriage in our state and neighboring jurisdictions is changing. The State of Maryland now grants equal status to the legal marriage of a same gender couple who moves to our state. Legal marriage is now available to same gender couples in the neighboring District of Columbia. We continue to grieve the legal inequities and the consequences they hold for same gender couples and their families. Some among us are led to publicly witness our discomfort with this inequity and to act for the legalization of marriage in Maryland for same gender couples.

This minute reflects the current state of our collective discernment. We remain committed to sustaining our dialogue and sharing with one another as we seek way forward beyond our present divide. Continuing revelation and loving presence, we trust, will support as we labor with one another on this important matter of social justice and equality.

HERNDON MONTHLY MEETING

Herndon, Virginia

Minute September 20, 1998

Herndon Friends believe in the historical Quaker faith and testimonies that affirm the worth of committed, loving relationships. We value diversity in our community and welcome all who share our search for truth.

We therefore affirm that our Monthly Meeting will hold marriages and ceremonies of commitment under our care, following traditional clearness and approval procedures, and offering continued nurturance for both opposite gender and same gender couples, when one or both partners participate in our community and share our religious experience.

Excerpt from Pamphlet on Marriage March 12, 2000

Although concerned about the lack of equality for legally recognized marriage for same gender couples, Herndon Friends also recognized that there is historical Quaker precedent for conducting marriages outside the bounds of approval of civil

authorities. George Fox is quoted, “*For the right joining in marriage is the work of the Lord only, and not the priests or magistrates; for it is God’s ordinance and not man’s; and therefore Friends cannot consent that they should join them together: for we marry none; it is the Lord’s work, and we are but witnesses.*” 1669

HOPEWELL CENTRE MONTHLY MEETING

Clear Brook, Virginia

Minute of Approval of Same Sex Union October 2010

Since we believe the Light is within all, we have to come to unity that it is God who joins two people together. “Friends cannot consent that they should join them together for we marry none it is the Lord’s work and we are but witnesses.” (George Fox)

If two individuals, one or both of which are associated with the Meeting, feel led to join together in marriage, regardless of gender, Hopewell Centre will witness and support God’s union of them through our traditional clearness and approval process.

LANGLEY HILL MONTHLY MEETING

Langley, Virginia

Minute 1991

We affirm that our belief in that of God in every person embraces all human beings, so that we welcome to meetings for worship, to fellowship and to consideration for membership all persons, without consideration of sexual orientation. The Meeting extends its loving care to all members and attenders. Some forms of this care include counseling and clearness committees for individuals, couples and families, and providing for marriages and commitment ceremonies in the manner of Friends.

Excerpt from Letter from Clerk of Committee on Oversight and Family Relations May 14, 2000

After reviewing the minute from Virginia Half-Years Meeting, we (the committee) believe that our minute is consistent with the first two clauses of their minute. During our deliberations at Langley Hill leading up to the adoption of the 1991 minute, we considered language committing to political action; this was not included in our final minute. (This letter reported that the final clause of Virginia Half-Years Minute was referred to Langley Hill Social Concerns Committee to see whether there is interest in supporting political efforts to make same-gender marriage legal in the Commonwealth of Virginia.)

Response to Query on Quaker Marriages 2010

Last fall, Baltimore Yearly Meeting’s Ad Hoc Committee on Gender and Sexual Diversity Concerns asked monthly meetings to consider the following query, and invited responses (see query on p 24).

The Committee on Care and Clearness of Langley Hill Meeting has considered the query and we suggest the following response:

Langley Hill Meeting is sensitive to concerns of and for those couples whose marriages are not recognized by their civil jurisdiction. However we do not agree with the suggestion – implied by the query – that marriages under the care of the Meeting should have only a religious component, and not a civil component.

A marriage under the care of Langley Hill Meeting occurs during a called Meeting for Worship, during which the couple declare their vows to each other before God, witnessed by family and friends. Three members of the Meeting are recognized by the Commonwealth of Virginia as Registered Celebrants; they are authorized to sign the state marriage license confirming that the marriage took place. Heterosexual couples may request the services of one of our Registered Celebrants.

Minutes and Other Actions on Same Gender Marriage

Langley Hill Meeting has minuted our willingness to perform marriages (or commitment ceremonies) for same-gender couples. In such instances, at the present time, the couple would not have a marriage license from Virginia, and there would be no role for the Registered Celebrant. This would not affect the validity of the marriage in our eyes. We hope that the Commonwealth of Virginia will also come to recognize the validity of such a marriage for civil purposes.

Rather than restrict marriages under the care of Langely Hill Meeting to a religious component only, we prefer to continue to work to be able to also confirm the civil component for all couples.

LITTLE BRITAIN MONTHLY MEETING

Nottingham, Pennsylvania

Letter to Yearly Meeting January, 2000

“Little Britain Monthly Meeting welcomes the bondage of diversity within Baltimore Yearly Meeting, while recognizing that diversity by definition, includes the traditional, as well as the non-traditional. Our Monthly Meeting is small and has long drawn its standards from a faith in a Higher Being, often referred to as God, and a belief in scriptures. Most of our members are birthright, with many generations of Quaker Heritage, handed down from the time when Quakerism was Christ centered.

“At this time Little Britain Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends cannot find unity with Charlottesville and Virginia Half Year Meeting on the concern of same sex marriage. We respect other Meetings’ wishes to educate us as to their way of thinking, but we ask that they respect our diversity as well.

“We encourage each Monthly Meeting to seek clearness on this concern. We ask that Baltimore Yearly Meeting and its member Monthly Meetings respect the position held by each meeting.”

LITTLE FALLS MONTHLY MEETING

Fallston, Maryland

Minute June 3, 2001

It is our sincere belief that it is consistent with Friends historical faith and testimony that we practice a single standard for all committed relationships. We affirm, therefore, that Little Falls Meeting should hold marriages under our care following traditional, approved procedure for Clearness. This applies for both same or opposite sex members of Little Falls Meeting.

LYNCHBURG INDULGED MEETING

Lynchburg, Virginia

Excerpts from letter October 19, 1999

“...Lynchburg Indulged Meeting has not written its own minute concerning this matter, but rather has united with the minute in favor of same-sex marriage adopted by Roanoke Monthly Meeting several years ago. We also unite with Virginia Half Year’s minute in support of same-sex marriage...

“...Lynchburg Indulged Meeting unites specifically with the use of the word ‘marriage’ and with the understanding that same-sex marriages should be viewed as identical to opposite-sex marriages and not as some form of separate but equal union.”

MAURY RIVER MONTHLY MEETING

Lexington, Virginia

Minute February 23, 2008

Part One: Foundations

Maury River Friends unites with the basic Quaker understanding that two persons led to marry, wed one another in the presence of God; and thus it is not the Meeting itself nor a minister that marries the couple, but rather the two persons themselves, offering their vows with Divine Assistance during a corporate meeting for worship. Our role as Friends, therefore, is to support the couple in the discernment of their Leading and to provide practical assistance and prayerful witness to the exchange of their vows should Way open for the union. We offer this support to all couples seeking marriage among us. For couples marrying “under the care of the meeting” we also extend spiritual assistance into the life of the marriage itself.

Part Two: Affirmations

Discerning Divine Will is central to Quaker marriage, and because of its importance, we will undertake a process of discernment with all couples wishing to exchange vows among us. This process always engages the couple and the Meeting in mutual paths of discernment. Just as the two persons seek clarity regarding their Leading, so too must Meeting: if Way opens for the couple to marry, has Way also opened for us to support this couple’s Leading? At this time?

Since Spirit-led (Quaker) marriage is distinct from civil union, couples who do marry among us must also decide whether to request our help in securing legal recognition of their union. Seeking Divine Guidance for this secondary decision will also be part of the discernment process for each couple and the Meeting. In regard to this decision related to civil matters, has Way also opened for us to support the couple’s Leading? At this time?

Presently, the statutes of Virginia only legally recognize unions between persons of opposite genders. While we commit to recording marriages of both same-gendered and opposite-gendered couples in our Meeting minutes, we will continue to rely on Divine Guidance in directing subsequent actions with the state.

MENALLEN MONTHLY MEETING

Biglerville, Pennsylvania

Minute July, 2000

The members of Menallen Friends Meeting, after long and serious dialogue amongst ourselves and other Friends, can reach unity in the following minute on same gender marriages. We recognize that in our discussions on same gender marriages each person who spoke lovingly, following their divine Light which they felt within them, even when expressing diametrically opposing views. We understand, that at this time, we at Menallen are unable to reach clearness on same gender marriages, but know that through the continued careful listening to the Light within others we can continue our Quakerly search for eternal wisdom.

We would request that, for now, Baltimore Yearly Meeting would refrain from either condemning or condoning same gender marriages, realizing its contentiousness and divisiveness and its potential effect on the membership of individual Monthly meetings.

We at Menallen Friends Monthly Meetings support monogamous loving relationships and the importance of partnership benefits in sustaining such relationships. And as always, we at Menallen openly welcome everyone in our silent meditation, listening to that of God in each of us.

Minute February 2010

In response to the query circulated at Warrington Quarter from [the Ad-Hoc Committee on Gender and Sexual Diversity Concerns, (p 24)], the Friends of Menallen Monthly Meeting send the following response:

Minutes and Other Actions on Same Gender Marriage

Those members in attendance today, find unity in supporting monogamous, loving relationships and the importance of partnership benefits in sustaining such relationships. As always we at Menallen openly welcome everyone in our silent meditation listening to that of God in each of us. Any couple who come before us seeking marriage under the care of this Meeting, regardless of gender, will be assigned to a committee of clearness, as is the practice of the Society of Friends.

MIDLOTHIAN MONTHLY MEETING

Midlothian, Virginia

Minute June, 1995

The Midlothian Meeting Community has seen the need to re-examine our practice of only using the term “celebration of commitment” to describe the union of same gender couples. Midlothian Friends offers a choice of Marriage or “celebration of commitment” to all couples under the care of Meeting, following Baltimore Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice for those wishing to make such a spiritual commitment to one another.

Excerpts from Christmas letter to Friends December 10, 1996

“Like many churches we have struggled with issues surrounding the equal treatment of gay and lesbian people. As Quakers, our particular religious tradition holds strongly to the ideal that there is that of God in everyone (John 1:6-9)...We believe that one of the greatest social challenges now facing each churchgoer in our day surrounds the equal treatment of gay and lesbian people. As a spiritual community we have become convinced that God wants all creation to be treated with respect, dignity, and love.”

NOTTINGHAM MONTHLY MEETING

Oxford, Pennsylvania

Newsletter excerpt May, 2000

“After laboring worshipfully and conscientiously researching other meetings’ attitudes toward ceremonies of commitment between persons of the same sex, our “Ad Hoc” committee polled Meeting members to determine their relevant attitudes and beliefs. *(The article presents the proposed minute from the committee for consideration in October, 1999.)* Friends did not find unity to accept this (10/99) minute and in March, 2000, a revision was proposed (*which changed the word ‘marriage’ to ‘commitment’*):

“We affirm our sincere willingness as a monthly meeting to witness celebrations of commitment for same-gender couples. We intend to follow the good order of Friends in arriving at clearness for all couples who are led to unite under our loving care.”

PATAPSCO PREPARATIVE MEETING [LATER PATAPSCO MONTHLY MEETING]

Ellicott City, Maryland

Minute on Same Gender Marriage April 30, 2000

Ministry and Oversight presented its proposed minute on Same Sex Marriages. Discussion followed, including a distinction made between spiritual and civil marriages, with the note being made that a same-gender couple does not have the opportunity to have a civil union. Changes were made to it pursuant to the discussion, the final version reading as follows:

“Friends at Patapsco Preparative Meeting have given the issue of marriage and committed unions prayerful consideration. A guiding principle of our meeting is to nurture spiritually grounded and committed relationships of all kinds, whether between individuals and the meeting community, within families, or between two people in a committed relationship. Consistent with that broader principle, the meeting will consider, without regard to gender, requests from couples to take marriages under its loving care and to witness to such marriages in worship. Also consistent with that broader principle,

the meeting will consider, without regard to gender, requests from couples to take committed unions under its loving care and to witness to such committed unions in worship. In addition, we wish to minute our support for adopting non-gender specific language throughout Faith and Practice.”

This minute was approved by all in attendance.

A reply will be made to the Virginia Half-Yearly meeting, and the minute will be submitted to the clerk of Sandy Spring Meeting.

Minute May 7, 2006

[In May 2006, Patapsco Meeting considered the minute approved by FGC Central Committee’s 2004 minute on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer Friends (see full minute on p 27), and approved its own minute that endorsed the spirit of that minute. However, we do not currently have a version of that minute.]

Minute October 4, 2009

Friends reviewed the proposed minute of the Ad Hoc Committee [p 24]. After discussion, we decided to reaffirm the minute we approved in April 2000.

[See above for full text of Patapsco Monthly Meeting April 2000 minute]

In addition to reaffirming the above minute, we approved the following minute:

“Patapsco Friends Meeting will not participate in obtaining legal recognition of marriages taken under its care until such legal recognition is available to all without respect to the sexes of the couple.”

PATUXENT MONTHLY MEETING

Lusby, Maryland

Minute February, 1996

Patuxent Friends believe in the Quaker testimony of equal treatment for all human beings and affirm the goodness of committed, loving relationships, regardless of sexual orientation. We offer recognition and support to those who share this ideal and desire to enter into a permanent relationship. By tradition, the Meeting recognizes committed heterosexual union. The same loving care and consideration will be given by the Meeting to the union of same-sex couples. In both cases, the ceremony will be called either marriage or celebration of commitment, according to the wishes of the couple involved.

Minute 2010

We unite in joy with [the BYM Ad-Hoc Committee on Gender and Sexual Diversity Concern’s] minute of Eight month 6 2010 on Equality for those of all sexual orientations and gender identifications.

PIPE CREEK MONTHLY MEETING

Union Bridge, Maryland

Minute July 9, 2000

We unite with Virginia Half-Year’s meeting on same-sex marriage after a postponement of further consideration made several months ago, but with some discomfort in the absence of a member of uncertain views.

Letter to the Ad-Hoc Committee on Gender and Sexual Diversity Concerns [excerpt] October 2009

...This is clearly asking us if we (the RSOF of Baltimore Yearly Meeting) ought to “offer the same marriage under the care of the meeting – no more no less – to all couples...”.

Our Meeting examined this question as recently as 2008 and felt led to minute our support of “all adults to marry under the care of this Meeting who will commit to one another in love and fidelity”. We support that same principle throughout BYM for those Meetings that are so led.

QUAKER LAKE MONTHLY MEETING

Quaker Lake Farm, Virginia

November, 1992

We do not view same gender union as inherently immoral. If the union is loving, non-exploitative and holistic, then it is beyond reproach. A holistic, same-gender relationship may be more difficult to achieve, but we do believe that such a healthy relationship is nonetheless possible. Moreover, scientific research suggests that sexual orientation is determined by genetics rather than by choice.

Based on the above moral considerations, we do recognize the right of two persons of the same gender to enter into a marriage and would as a Meeting, seek to nurture such a commitment in the same way we seek to nurture marriage commitments between persons of the opposite sex. However, since same gender marriages would face many problems (societal misunderstanding and discrimination, questions of role models for children, etc.) that are not faced by opposite gender marriages, extra counseling would be recommended. Even though same gender marriage commitments are not legally binding, we would expect the parties entering into such a commitment to treat it as if it were legally binding.

RICHMOND MONTHLY MEETING

Richmond, Virginia

Minute February 19, 1989

Richmond Friends Meeting extends its loving care and support to all individuals and couples in our Meeting community. A committed, loving relationship provides a framework within which spiritual growth can occur. Therefore, we affirm our willingness to hold a celebration of commitment under the care of the Meeting for same-gender couples at least one of whom is a member or active attender of Richmond Friends Meeting. This is evidence of our spiritual support of such a long-term relationship. The customary process for marriage outlined in Faith and Practice will be followed.

Excerpt from letter November 18, 1999

Richmond Monthly Meeting unites with Charlottesville Monthly Meeting regarding the minute from Virginia Half-Years Meeting on the same subject...We indicated our unity with a minute to that effect at our monthly meeting for worship for business on the 18th of Seventh Month, 1999.

ROANOKE MONTHLY MEETING

Roanoke, Virginia

Minute November 21, 1999

“In response to the revision to the questions considered by a couple before application to the monthly meeting for marriage under its care...We discussed the revisions, forwarded our suggestions on a few changes and approved the Chesapeake Quarterly Meeting revisions.

Minute September 19, 2010

Historically Friends held a called Meeting for Worship to celebrate the religious commitment and spiritual union of two of their members. There was no legal or civil component to these earliest marriages, because the state did not sanction marriage between two Friends in a Quaker Meeting House. Today many of our Friends are in a similar position. No legal jurisdiction within the boundaries of our Yearly Meeting will sanction marriage between two Friends of the same gender. Rather than supporting a state sanctioned inequitable system, in accordance with our testimony to equality, Roanoke Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends offers the same marriage under the care of the Meeting—no more and no

less—to all couples. Couples who are married under the care of our Meeting will be informed of the legal implications of Quaker marriage. If a couple wishes to be legally recognized by the state of Virginia, they will need to follow up with whatever is necessary on their own for that legal recognition.

SANDY SPRING MONTHLY MEETING

Sandy Spring, Maryland

Minute as an Excerpt from Monthly Meeting newsletter June, 2000

“Ministry and Counsel and Marriage and Family relations brought a revised draft of a minute on Same-Gender Unions. After serious consideration, the following revised minute was approved.”

We have struggled and sought clarity on the spiritual and socio-legal issues of same gender marriage and the minute from Charlottesville (Monthly Meeting and Virginia) Half-Yearly Meeting. At present, we do not have unity on the issues involved on a statement about these issues. We continue to hold these concerns and each other tenderly and we try to love and honor each other as we seek further clarity.

STATE COLLEGE MONTHLY MEETING

State College, Pennsylvania

Minute April, 1993

We, The members and attenders of State College Friends Meeting, affirm our belief in that of God in every person. Furthermore, we attest that this belief embraces all people including homosexual, bisexual, and heterosexual people. We recognize that all these people play a full part in the Society of Friends. When struggling with our differences we realize how easy it is to lose sight of the fact that we are all children of God. But as a community of faith, we are dedicated to ideals of harmony and social justice and the inestimable worth of every child of God.

We believe it is consistent with Friends' historical faith and testimonies to adopt and practice a single standard of treatment for all human beings. Therefore, the same standards under the law which are applied to heterosexual people should also be applied to homosexual people. Since homosexual people suffer serious discrimination in many aspects of life, we believe that civil rights laws should protect them. In particular we advocate the revision of all laws and policies imposing disabilities and penalties upon homosexual people.

Minute May 7, 1995

It is our belief that it is consistent with Friends' historical faith and testimonies that we practice a single standard of treatment for all committed relationships. We therefore affirm that our Monthly Meeting will hold marriages under our care, following traditional clearness and approval procedures, for both opposite-gender and same-gender couples, when one or both partners participate in our community and share our religious experience.

Excerpt from pamphlet on FLGC at State College May, 1999

“In 1989, a group at State College Meeting started a chapter of the national Friends for Lesbian and Gay Concerns (FLGC). While the inability of the Meeting to reach agreement on the minute of welcome had been painful, forming FLGC was a way to demonstrate support for one another and for the principles involved...The group has become ecumenical. This diversification has enriched FLGC as it has become a spiritual home to people of different perspectives who share very simple common needs.”

Welcoming statement on Meeting website August 2010

Our meeting welcomes lesbians and gay men. Our discussions on same-gender marriage began in 1987. We did not reach unity on this issue at that time, but had important discussions about this issue. In 1993, we minuted a resolution affirming our support for the rights of people regardless of sexual orientation. In 1995, we minuted a resolution stating that same gender couples would be married under the care of the meeting on the same basis as any other couple.

We have an informal local chapter of FLGC (Friends for Lesbian and Gay Concerns), which has been helpful in promoting the discussions that led to the minutes mentioned above. Our local chapter has both straight and gay members. The primary activity is meeting once a month, usually for a potluck and worship sharing or a program. All interested people are welcome to attend.

VALLEY FRIENDS MEETING

Dayton, Virginia

Introduction December 7, 2009

In our dealings with each other and with the world, Quakers are guided by individual and collective religious experience of the Inner Light. This Light or Guide is inherent in everyone and it is the wellspring from which Friends have been moved for over 350 years to work for peace and social justice for all people. Thus, Quakers have been early and persistent advocates for education and prison reform, women's rights and anti-slavery and anti-war movements. Friends' experience of the inner light has also been central to our recognition, understanding and acceptance of continuing revelation. Just as spiritual revelation unfolds with deepening experience in each person over the course of her/his life, so too does revelation unfold collectively within and across generations. Each generation is presented with new knowledge in the world, knowledge that is tested against the spiritual insights, values and testimonies arising from the depths of Quaker religious experience. When such new knowledge is found to be in accord with those insights and values it must be accepted, even when it refutes previously held understanding. Continuing revelation also means that we humbly acknowledge the limitations of our understanding at any given time so that we may remain open to the unfolding of a fuller, deeper experience of life and the way forward.

The following minutes therefore are not an endpoint but instead they are four moments in an ongoing, unfolding process that has been as faithful as possible to our individual and collective experience of the Inner Light.

Minute 1 Welcome December 7, 2009

We wish our Meeting to be a publicly affirming, safe and nurturing place for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons. We extend our loving care and support to all LGBT persons who seek to share the Quaker spiritual journey and corporate life.

Minute 2 Marriage December 7, 2009

Valley Friends Meeting affirms and celebrates all loving, non-exploitative relationships. The Meeting welcomes lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and heterosexual couples to have their relationship affirmed in a marriage in the manner of Friends under the care of Valley Friends Meeting. All requests to be married under the care of the Meeting will be considered in the same way, without regard to sexual orientation. In accordance with Friends' practice, all couples shall have at least one partner who is a member or long-term attender of the Meeting and they will submit their request to marry to a Clearness Committee. Final approval to be married in the manner of Friends rests with the Monthly Meeting.

Minute 3 Advocacy December 7, 2009

Aware of the socially, politically, economically and legally inflicted suffering of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, we affirm the power and joy of all non-exploitative, loving relationships. As a Meeting and as individuals, we oppose any abridgment of the right to share this love. We therefore declare our intention to publicly advocate for full social acceptance and full legal rights and privileges for all lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals and for couples of the same gender.

Minute 4 Introduction December 7, 2009

Given this declaration of advocacy, how shall we be guided in our relations with organizations whose policies discriminate against persons who are LGBT? In particular, how shall we relate to FUM and EMU, organizations that are noted for their dedication to peacemaking and justice but also forbid the hiring of those who are openly living a lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender life?

FUM is an umbrella Quaker organization to which many yearly meetings belong, including our own Baltimore Yearly

Meeting (BYM). FUM Friends have labored over many decades to bring Quaker faith and practice to people in South America and Africa. They have built schools, colleges and hospitals and been a presence for peace and justice in some of the most troubled and economically depressed areas of the world.

Since FUM's discrimination against LGBT persons surfaced several years ago, BYM's annual, financial contribution to FUM, derived from monthly meeting apportionments, has been frozen. Some of those frozen monies have been used to fund inter-visitation of BYM Friends with other FUM Friends. As of yet, no way forward has arisen with regard to the BYM/FUM funds or, more generally, as to how BYM Friends shall be in relationship to FUM.

Our relationship with EMU is primarily through the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding (CJP) and the Summer Peacebuilding Institute (SPI). Several of our members and attenders have taken classes at CJP and some have completed graduate degree programs there. SPI offers short, intensive courses on the theory and practice of peacemaking to individuals from around the world. Our meeting has joyfully offered a scholarship to a Quaker applicant to the SPI over the past five years.

Thus, it can be seen that while we are not in unity on LGBT concerns with FUM and EMU, we are in accord with these institutions on many other issues of peacemaking and justice. How then shall we go forward with FUM and EMU and other organizations that discriminate against persons who are LGBT?

On the one hand, we could sever relationships with these organizations, withdrawing our financial support until such time as they eliminate their policies of discrimination. On the other hand, we could stay in relationship while advocating for LGBT acceptance. Which of these two actions would best honor our solidarity with, and advocacy for, LGBT persons? Which action is in deepest accord with our experience of the Inner Light?

A strong argument to disengage from FUM and EMU, and indeed all organizations that discriminate against persons who are LGBT, can be made based on the understanding such discrimination is morally equivalent to discrimination based on race or gender. Isn't withdrawal of support from FUM and EMU therefore morally defensible and indeed, morally compelling?

While withdrawal from FUM, EMU and indeed all organizations that discriminate against LGBT persons would make a strong statement about our commitment to LGBT rights and acceptance, such a course of action has three serious drawbacks.

First, these concerns are relatively new social concerns in our culture and thus there are many, many organizations that are not yet accepting of persons who are LGBT. Are we to withdraw from all such organizations? Are we to refrain from shopping with all retailers whose policies are not yet LGBT friendly? Are we to withhold our local, state and federal taxes because these governments do not yet sanction full civil and legal rights for LGBT persons? Are we to refrain from visiting cities, states and countries that are antagonistic to LGBT acceptance and rights? And if we shun all such businesses, governments and localities how are we to advocate with them for change? In the case of FUM and EMU, how can we hope to change hearts and minds and thus bring about full LGBT acceptance if we have withdrawn from our relationships and closed the door on further conversation?

Second, we are also mindful that withdrawal from FUM and EMU would also be a separation from LGBT persons and their supporters in those organizations. One Baltimore Yearly Friend with extensive experience in East Africa, David Zarembka, has written movingly of the need to stay engaged, and in solidarity, with African FUM Friends who are working to build a less homophobic African culture. Does the benefit of principled withdrawal from FUM and EMU outweigh the cost of separation from persons within those organizations who are working to change their policies? Our hearts are uneasy with the prospect of that withdrawal.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, the act of turning away from people and organizations with whom we are in disagreement is contrary to our experience of the inner light. In the aftermath of 9-11, our meeting engaged in many months of soul-searching about peacemaking and nonviolence. In February 2002 ministry arose in worship about "embracing the

other.” That ministry was seasoned over the next four months and then approved in a minute in sixth month. Excerpts from the minute follow. The Light revealed in 2002 with regard to peacemaking and nonviolence also illuminates activism for LGBT acceptance in 2009.

“By turning away from those with whom we disagree, we separate from them, even demonize them. They become our enemies. We seek to counter this separation by moving towards and embracing those political leaders with whom we disagree. This movement does not require us to abandon our commitment to nonviolence and peace. On the contrary, it compels us to expand our circle of loving concern to include those with whom we have the sharpest disagreements. Thus, steadfast in our vision of peace, as revealed by our experience of the inner light, we feel called to embrace our political leaders with tender, loving witness.

Our ongoing discernment of the spirit of peacemaking has also left us truly humbled. As Quakers, we try to live the life of nonviolence ministered by Jesus when he asked his disciples to “love your enemies” and to “turn the other cheek.” However, as individuals and as a community, we are painfully aware of our own shortcomings in the struggle to live life nonviolently. We are also aware that war and violence have been normative throughout human history and that bringing the world to the peace advocated by Jesus will require efforts extending over decades and centuries. And yet, we are compelled to continue along the path of peacemaking because of our experiences, in worship and prayer, of the living, Inward Light.

Valley Friends are thus united in a desire to be peacemakers, following the narrow path, our footsteps illuminated by the Inner Light, the teachings of Jesus and our Quaker religious heritage. Fundamental to this journey is the crucial action of turning towards and embracing those with whom we are in opposition. We must steadfastly choose this act, over and over again, in our homes, in our meeting and in our wider community so that we may effectively witness for peace for our nation and our world. Our individual and communal peacemaking efforts are all vital pieces, however small, of a very, very long-term effort to move humanity away from violence.”

Thus, it seems clear that our collective path is one of moving towards and embracing those with whom we are in opposition with regard to LGBT rights and acceptance. As tempting as it might be to turn away from FUM and EMU as a matter of principle, to do so would be turning away from the Inner Guide. To paraphrase the minute of 2002, fundamental to this journey towards social justice for persons who are LGBT is the crucial action of turning towards and embracing those who are opposed to LGBT acceptance. We must choose this act, over and over again, so that we may effectively witness for LGBT acceptance and rights with a loving and tender heart. We are convinced that in this way we can best honor our solidarity with, and advocacy for, LGBT persons because this way forward is in deepest accord with our experience of the Inner Light.

Minute 4 How shall we relate to organizations that discriminate against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons? December 7, 2009

Our wish to turn towards those with whom we disagree leads us to conclude that we must stay in friendly relationship with institutions that discriminate against persons who are LGBT, especially when we otherwise have much in common with them. The principle of continuing revelation helps us to see that progress on rights for LGBT persons will be an evolutionary process based primarily in the growth of understanding. Therefore, Valley Friends Meeting intends to advocate clearly and energetically for full social acceptance and full legal rights and privileges for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals and for couples of the same gender while remaining in relationship with institutions who do not share our conviction on this issue. The form that advocacy will take must be discerned on a case-by-case basis as illuminated by our collective experience of the Inner Light.

FRIENDS MEETING OF WASHINGTON

Washington, DC

Minute February 9, 1992

For several years, Friends Meeting of Washington has been considering taking under its care ceremonies of commitment between couples of the same gender. During most of this time we have not been able to discern the sense of the Meeting on the issue. Some Friends, deeply, and, on a spiritual basis, have objected to our Meeting’s approval of same-gender cer-

emonies of commitment. Other Friends believe the Meeting should make the ceremony available to all who wish to enter into and continue a stable, loving and committed relationship with God and the Holy Spirit in the center.

We are, however, united in our support of the meaning and values inherent in a committed relationship based on the Holy Spirit and in our commitment to being open to the continuing revelation of the Spirit.

We have now come to a sense of the meeting that we wish to affirm our consideration of all requests for ceremonies of commitment under the care of the Meeting according to the custom of Friends, regardless of the gender of the couple requesting our care. This is an issue with which many of us have struggled. Some of us are still uneasy with our approval of ceremonies of commitment between couples of the same sex. However, we hold each other in tender love as we take this action. May God be with us as we search for peace within each of us and within the Meeting community.

(Friends expressed their appreciation for the spiritual growth that the often difficult discussion of this issue has brought to our Meeting, and their continuing love of all those Friends who, despite their concern, have put their trust in the shared wisdom of the Meeting.)

Minute September 13, 1998

First, all unions of two persons that have received approval of the Worship and Family Committee and the Meeting for Business, as outlined in our Handbook, could be called “marriages” without regard to the gender of the person involved.

Second, Friends recognize that some couples, regardless of their gender, may wish to call their union held under the care of the Meeting “a union of commitment,” and the Meeting will allow that nomenclature.

Third, any couple whose union under the Meeting’s care had been called a “union of commitment,” because the Meeting was not yet open to calling all unions under its care “marriages,” could at the request of the couple, be recorded in the records of the Meeting as a marriage.

(Approved with one Friend recorded in opposition to the third part and with another Friend’s wish to have the minutes acknowledge her differences with the Meeting on this matter. Also, the Clerk encouraged the Worship & Family Committee to work on clarifying the clearness process.)

Minute on Reporting Same-Gender Marriages July 18, 1999

Friends APPROVED reporting by letter to the relevant Marriage Bureau (Washington, D.C. Or another jurisdiction if the marriage is witnessed there) same-gender marriages witnessed in good order by the Friends Meeting of Washington, for which a marriage license was not legally available and, hence, could not be returned in the usual manner. Such letters should be sent only with the concurrence of the married couple.

WEST BRANCH MONTHLY MEETING

Grampion, Pennsylvania

Statement November, 1995

(A statement was written and signed by members of the Meeting opposing same sex relationships and like marriages.)

Minute September 29, 2002

West Branch Friends are disturbed by the proposed changes to “Faith and Practice” regarding marriage (Appendix F). These changes appear to us to be a way to circumvent the inaction of Baltimore Yearly Meeting in session. We refer to minute Y2000-26 “Friends, we do not have unity on Virginia Half Years Meeting’s statement.”

While concerns for gender-neutral language may be appropriate for other sections of our Faith and Practice, we feel this change to be highly inappropriate based on the lack of unity as minuted above, as well as our own personal convictions. It is “the general consensus of the Meeting that we are accepting of those who have chosen homosexuality as an alternative lifestyle and will treat them no differently than any other of God’s children but that sanctifying marriage between same sex couples goes against the teachings of the Bible” (WBMM 8/18/02). As guardians of the sanctity and autonomy of this

local meeting, we believe that decisions of this sort should remain on the local level. Our representatives to Baltimore Yearly Meeting have reported over the years in a sense of pride the Yearly Meeting has had in its diversity. We perceive that actions in the past few years are attempting to stamp out that diversity.

The Divine Spirit speaks to many people in many ways. Our spiritual discernment leads West Branch Friends to stand in the way of these proposed changes.

WILLIAMSBURG MONTHLY MEETING

Williamsburg, Virginia

Minute March 14, 1993

Williamsburg Friends Meeting is committed to the spiritual development of its members and attenders. In that spirit, the Meeting extends its active support to couples who make life-long commitments, regardless of their sexual orientation. Same gender relationships may be affirmed in a celebration of commitment under the care of the Williamsburg Meeting. In this way, the Williamsburg Friends Meeting declares its intention to embrace all couples who make life-long commitments, and who wish to live these out in the manner of Friends.

YORK MONTHLY MEETING

York, Pennsylvania

Excerpt from letter November 14, 1999

“At a special called meeting this date for the consideration of support of the minute approved by Charlottesville Friends concerning issues of same sex marriages, unity of the meeting was obtained.

“York Meeting offers our support of the Charlottesville Meeting and Virginia Half-Year Meeting in their work concerning same-sex marriage issues. We are in the process of discussions in our own meeting and will inform both them and Yearly Meeting of our Minute when completed. We continue to hold all in the Light as we as a meeting and individuals seek guidance in this concern.”

Minute on Same-Gender Marriage January 9, 2000

York Friends recognize marriages to affirm lifelong loving commitments, to support families, and to strengthen our spiritual community. It is fundamental to Quaker faith and practice that we honor the equality and integrity of all human beings and affirm individuals in their leadings. Therefore, we find it consistent with Quakers’ historical faith and testimonies that we practice a single standard of treatment for all couples who wish to marry.

As Friends we have traditionally celebrated unions as marriages under the care of the Meeting. We affirm that we will offer the same loving care and consideration to all couples without regard to gender.

Gay and lesbian Friends and couples bless our Meeting. Their gifts of courage, love, and devotion speak to us of God, and move us closer to that of God within us all.

The York Friends Meeting acknowledges that the state offers legal recognition of opposite-sex marriages and extends significant rights, privileges and responsibilities to couples who legally marry. We believe a commitment to equality requires that same-gender couples be offered those same rights, privileges and responsibilities.

II. MINUTES FROM QUARTERLY AND HALF-YEARS MEETINGS

CENTRE QUARTERLY MEETING

[Dunnings Creek, Fishertown, State College, and West Branch Monthly Meetings]

Minute June 4, 2000

Centre Quarter Friends recognize the diversity that exists within our numbers and geographic area. The love and fellowship we share are of utmost importance. We therefore unite in the sense that no decision can be made that alienates even one of our number. We are therefore as a Quarter not prepared to move forward on the Same-Sex Marriage Proposal. We will continue to be open to this concern.

Minute June 6, 2004

Centre Quarterly Meeting affirms with the Gospel of John that the true light of Christ is the true light that enlightens everyone. We also affirm that gay and lesbian Friends within Baltimore Yearly Meeting and within many of its constituent monthly meetings have truly exercised their gifts for the building up of our spiritual communities. We endorse the policy of the Baltimore Yearly Meeting Search and Nominating Committee to seek Friends for leadership roles by discerning whether they possess the appropriate spiritual depth, clerking skills, and caring natures, regardless of sexual orientation.

The constituent monthly meetings of Centre Quarterly Meeting welcome all children of God to worship with us and to contribute to our communities in accordance with their gifts, without regard to their sexual orientation.

CHESAPEAKE QUARTERLY MEETING

[Annapolis, Baltimore-Homewood, Baltimore-Stony Run, Gunpowder, Little Falls, Patapsco, Patuxent, Sandy Spring Monthly Meeting, and Seneca Valley Preparative Meeting]

Minute in response to presentation of Baltimore, Stony Run's Minute on Marriage and Meeting for Commitment September 11, 1994

After a long discussion, the following was approved:

- A. To ask Yearly Meeting to include the document in the Interchange with a statement that Stony Run has agreed on this and offers it for consideration.
- B. To go back to Monthly Meetings with the minute as an item shared at Quarterly Meeting and have the Monthly Meeting consider it.

VIRGINIA HALF-YEARS MEETING

Minute on Equality of Rights for Same-Sex Marriages June 12, 1999

Virginia Half-Years Meeting extends its full welcome to members without regard to sexual orientation; it affirms its support of Meetings' witnessing to marriages between couples of the same sex who are found clear to marry under the care of Monthly Meetings, understanding that legal support under the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia is not yet present for this commitment; it will publish the minute to all Virginia Meetings and send it also to Baltimore Yearly Meeting, requesting that a like minute be comprised in due course by the Baltimore Yearly Meeting, and will sponsor efforts to make same-sex marriage legal in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Letter to Virginia Meeting Clerks June 27, 1999

At the Virginia Half-Years Meeting session held at The Clearing near Richmond on 12 June, 1999, Friends considered a minute concerning issues in same-sex marriages which had been approved by Charlottesville, and brought to the Half-Years Meeting with the request that it be considered. This led to the approval by the Half-Years Meeting of the following minute:

(Minute from 1999: see above for text)

Minutes and Other Actions on Same Gender Marriage

As the minute notes, Virginia Half-Years Meeting Friends are eager that monthly meetings in Virginia take up this concern, both as a spiritual outreach to all sincere seekers, and as a political witness opposing Virginia's laws which bar the rights and responsibilities of marriage from gay and lesbian couples. As the social and legal environments are similar in Maryland and Pennsylvania, we hope that Baltimore Yearly Meeting can unite with our concern as well.

Many of the monthly meetings within Virginia Half-Years Meeting have labored with this concern over the past several years. A number of them have approved minutes that are similar to the Half-Years Meeting's minute, although varying in emphasis or scope. In some cases, within individual meetings, a deepening of awareness of the issues over time has led to a series of minutes reflecting this increased understanding (*an earlier minute from Charlottesville Friends was attached*).

“Virginia Half-Years Meeting Friends are well aware the questions of equality of marriage rights for gay and lesbian couples raises deep and important questions among individuals and monthly meetings, questions relating to the religious and secular meanings of marriage, the roles of sexuality, procreation, and parenting in marriage, and the nature of a spiritually-nurtured commitment between two people. Our minute is not intended to suggest we have found all the answers to these questions, but we do believe that this is the time to engage one another in a process of spiritual discernment. We invite and urge Friends to join us.”

III. MINUTES FROM BALTIMORE YEARLY MEETING COMMITTEES

BYM AD-HOC COMMITTEE ON GENDER AND SEXUAL DIVERSITY CONCERNS

Letter on Marriage August, 2009

The BYM Ad Hoc Committee on Gender and Sexual Diversity Concerns asks your Monthly Meeting to consider the following query and send your responses to us:

“Historically Friends held a called Meeting for Worship to celebrate the religious commitment and spiritual union of two of their members. There was no legal or civil component to these earliest marriages, because the state did not sanction marriage between two Friends in a Quaker Meeting House. Today many of our Friends are in a similar position. No legal jurisdiction within the boundaries of our Yearly Meeting will sanction marriage between two Friends of the same gender. Is it time to encourage a return to this earlier practice of separation of church and state? In accordance with our testimony to equality, should we offer the same marriage under the care of Meeting—no more and no less—to all couples, while encouraging couples who are legally able, to have a separate civil ceremony?”

BYM YOUNG ADULT FRIENDS

Minute on Same-Sex Marriage August, 2007

We, the Young Adult Friends of Baltimore Yearly Meeting, are led to speak to the question of same-sex marriage in our yearly meeting. We have found that the value of a relationship is not determined by gender, but by the presence of mutual love and respect. As a group, our members are in many different places with regard to the formation of long-term partnerships. While some of us are just starting to form these relationships, others are already deeply committed.

We have felt great joy in seeing members of our community marry under the care of their meetings, and we strive to provide ongoing support for these relationships. However, it grieves us that discussion of same-sex marriage is so painful to many Friends within our yearly meeting, and that not all marriages are equally recognized by the monthly meetings in BYM. We wish to work together with Friends to find unity on this living issue. We trust that with good process and in God’s time, we will.

BYM YOUNG FRIENDS

Minute on Same-Sex Marriage August, 1999

We, as Young Friends of BYM, living in the Quaker tradition, believe that the greater Quaker community should not only permit but should embrace same-sex marriage. Quaker testimonies, according to BYM Faith and Practice, provide ample justification for this stance. The testimonies spring from respect for truth; for peace, harmony, and a settled intention to practice love; for simplicity, community, and equal worth of all people.” (Faith and Practice, p. 48)

The testimony on equality provides the most obvious support for our position. In living the testimony, we must allow the ministry of love to be available to all. Sexual orientation does not diminish or alter the Divine Light that Quakers recognize in every person. Quakers have often been at the forefront of similar struggles for equal rights, such as the abolition of slavery, women’s suffrage, and the civil rights movement. Now presented with a new struggle, should we not continue to put our testimonies into action? Our respect for peace and harmony leads us to uphold the spirit to the community. Since we strive to be welcoming to all people, must we not foster an environment in which all can pursue their spiritual journeys? If, in the course of that journey, leading for marriage occurs, their Meeting has an obligation to allow way to open for the couple. When a religious tradition cannot fulfill the spiritual needs of its members, they are excluded from the community. As marriage is a spiritual need, people who cannot marry under the Religious Society of Friends may be forced to meet their needs elsewhere.

Our community should empower people to be true to themselves and their leading. If two people are led to make a lifelong commitment to each other, then to repress such an essential part of themselves goes against the testimony of truthfulness.

Quakers have no expectations about what is necessary in a marriage, besides the existence of a powerful love. Every marriage is unique. In celebrating same-sex marriage we will enhance the already present diversity and strength of our community.

IV. MINUTES FROM BALTIMORE YEARLY MEETING ANNUAL SESSION AND REPRESENTATIVE / INTERIM MEETING

Y1973 Minute #87 of Baltimore Yearly Meeting on general respect of sexual diversity.

We urge Friends to put new energy into the struggle to end the oppression, often unconscious, that is imposed on people because of their sex or their sexual orientation. Men and women must be freed of the rigid roles society teaches them. The myths about bisexuality and homosexuality, myths that perpetuate deep rooted discrimination, need to be dispelled through educational efforts, perhaps undertaken by the Monthly Meetings. Equally important are the efforts each individual must make to develop positive attitudes towards his or her sexuality and the sexuality of others, and to build mutually affirming relationships.

In accordance with Friends' testimony of the right and responsibility to follow the Inner Light, we hope we will come to respect the decisions of others about their own sexuality.

Y1983, Excerpt from Minute #47 of Baltimore Yearly Meeting on Sexual Prejudices

The clerk summarized the minute forwarded by Homewood Friends Meeting and circulated at a previous session, whose major thrust was a reaffirmation of this Yearly Meeting's Minute #87 of August 8, 1973...The clerk said he heard no sentiment looking to any change in the 1973 minute...

Y1999, Excerpt from Minute #23 of Baltimore Yearly Meeting on the Minute from Virginia Half-Year's Meeting on Equality of Marriage Rights:

...Friends acknowledged the receipt of this Minute and APPROVED forwarding it to all constituent Monthly and Quarterly Meetings for consideration. Accompanying information will be prepared for inclusion with this mailing.

Y2000, Minute #26 of Baltimore Yearly Meeting on the Minute from Virginia Half-Year's Meeting on Equality of Marriage Rights:

Ad Hoc Committee on Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Concerns. Bonnie Stockslager (Herndon), Clerk of this Ad Hoc Committee, commented on a written report, "Summary of Same Gender Marriage Responses from Meetings in Baltimore Yearly Meeting." She noted that there are more responses that have come into the Yearly Meeting Office. While there is unity within some Meetings, Bonnie's conclusion was "Friends, we do not have unity on Virginia Half Year's Meeting's statement."

What she sees as needed now is listening, listening respectfully, eagerly learning of one another's concerns, learning of other Meetings. We must be patient, tender, and follow Quaker process, regardless of how long it takes.

A request was made for all the minutes to be made available to individual Monthly Meetings. This was agreed to.

R2000, Excerpt from Minute #36 of Baltimore Yearly Meeting Representatives Meeting, October 2000, on Revision of Faith and Practice

(Note that most of this minute relates to proposed changes to Appendix F that are unrelated to questions of same-sex marriage; those unrelated sections are not included.)

Chesapeake Quarterly Meeting and Goose Creek Monthly Meeting proposed revisions to Appendix F and Representative Meeting circulated them to all the Monthly Meetings of the Yearly Meeting.... Two Monthly Meetings noted that whereas the discussion of marriage, sexuality, and family were gender-neutral, the queries were not.... Publications Committee proposes that it be allowed to change the queries to be gender-neutral and circulate these revisions to Monthly Meetings when other issues have been resolved....

As suggested by the Committee, we...also DIRECTED the Publications Committee to develop and send to our Monthly Meetings proposed changes to produce gender-neutral queries on marriage, sexuality, and family....

I2005, Minute #14 of Baltimore Yearly Meeting Interim Meeting, on the Federal Marriage Amendment

Ad hoc Committee on Gender and Sexual Diversity Concern. Committee Clerk Aron Teel presented the revised proposed minute in opposition to the Federal Marriage Act:

The faith and practice of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) has always been to seek that of God in everyone. From this, we have come to know that God's love extends to all of Creation. All children of God regardless of their perceived or identified sexual orientation are beloved of God who created them, and all are deserving of love and compassion in accordance with the example and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Within our Baltimore Yearly Meeting, we have not yet come to unity on the question of marriage for same-sex couples. However, it is surely not the Federal government's role to prefer one religious definition of marriage over another, much less to codify such a preference in the U.S. Constitution. To the contrary, the great contribution of our Constitution is to protect the rights of all faiths and all citizens. Throughout its history, the United States Constitution has been amended toward equal treatment for all. Even though the practice has always fallen short of the ideal, changes to the Constitution have always been made to favor including more citizens with equal treatment, rather than fewer. We see this trend to be in accordance with God's will for a just social order.

The proposed Federal Marriage Amendment (FMA) reverses this long march of history toward equality and compassion for all under the constitution. By denying same-sex couples the right to marry, the FMA obliterates the family rights that many same-sex couples and their families now have under various state laws. Thus the FMA reverses the Constitutional tradition of protecting individual freedoms, and forces states to adopt discriminatory policies.

As God's children, as members of the Baltimore Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, and as U.S. citizens, we do not support the proposed Constitutional amendment, known as the Federal Marriage Amendment (FMA) which would curtail the right of our brothers and sisters who are gay and lesbian to make loving commitments to each other within the same fundamental social and legal net by which everyone else is now supported.

Friends united in *Approval* of this Minute.

Aron also brought forward to Friends the concern for endorsing or uniting with the FGC Central Committee "Minute on Our Experience of and with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender & Queer Friends" read at Interim Meeting in 10/2004 [I2004-34]. Friends were united with the spirit of the minute, but wished to use this as the inspiration for our own language, sharing our own experiences. The Committee will return with a proposal at a later Interim Meeting. Monthly Meetings might be invited to share their experiences with the Committee in its preparation of a proposed minute.

I2005, Minute #29 of Baltimore Yearly Meeting Interim Meeting, on the FGC CC welcoming minute

Ad hoc Committee on Gender and Sexual Diversity Concerns: Aron Teel (Charlottesville), Clerk, pointed out that the Committee has received no response from Monthly Meetings regarding the Friends General Conference Central Committee's 2005 minute on the gifts and leadership of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and queer Friends within FGC. This minute was brought before Interim Meeting this time last year. The Committee is asking that committee members attend Quarterly and Monthly Meeting's Meetings for Business to present the FGC CC minute and listen to their experiences. The Clerk of Interim Meeting was APPROVED to send a cover letter to let Monthly Meetings know that the committee members will be knocking on their doors.

Friends General Conference Central Committee Minute October 2004

Our experience has been that spiritual gifts are not distributed with regard to sexual orientation or gender identity. Our experience has been that our Gatherings and Central Committee work have been immeasurably enriched over the years by the full participation and Spirit-guided leadership of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer Friends. We will never go back to silencing those voices or suppressing those gifts. Our experience confirms that we are all equal before God, as God made us, and we feel blessed to be engaged in the work of FGC together.

APPENDIX A: CHRONOLOGY OF MINUTES

1973 to 1996

Baltimore Yearly Meeting
Baltimore Monthly Meeting (Homewood)
Richmond Monthly Meeting
Baltimore Monthly Meeting (Homewood)
Charlottesville Monthly Meeting
Langley Hill Monthly Meeting
Adelphi Monthly Meeting
Friends Meeting of Washington
Quaker Lake Monthly Meeting
Williamsburg Monthly Meeting
State College Monthly Meeting
Annapolis Monthly Meeting
Baltimore Monthly Meeting (Stony Run)
Chesapeake Quarterly Meeting
Annapolis Monthly Meeting
State College Monthly Meeting
Midlothian Monthly Meeting
West Branch Monthly Meeting
Bethesda Monthly Meeting
Patuxent Monthly Meeting
Midlothian Monthly Meeting
Bethesda Monthly Meeting

1997 to 2002

Charlottesville Monthly Meeting
Friends Meeting of Washington
Herndon Monthly Meeting
Floyd Monthly Meeting
State College Monthly Meeting
Virginia Half-Years Meeting
Alexandria Monthly Meeting
Friends Meeting of Washington
Baltimore Yearly Meeting
BYM Young Friends
Blacksburg Monthly Meeting
Lynchburg Indulged Meeting
Gettysburg Monthly Meeting
York Monthly Meeting
Richmond Monthly Meeting
Roanoke Monthly Meeting
Fishertown Monthly Meeting
Little Britain Monthly Meeting
York Monthly Meeting

Herndon Monthly Meeting
Dunnings Creek Monthly Meeting
Patapsco Preparative Meeting [now Patapsco Monthly Meeting]
Frederick Monthly Meeting
Nottingham Monthly Meeting
Baltimore Monthly Meeting (Stony Run)
Langley Hill Monthly Meeting
Deer Creek Monthly Meeting
Sandy Spring Monthly Meeting
Centre Quarterly Meeting
Menallen Monthly Meeting
Carlisle Monthly Meeting
Pipe Creek Monthly Meeting
Baltimore Yearly Meeting
Little Falls Monthly Meeting
West Branch Monthly Meeting

2003 to 2010

Frederick Monthly Meeting
Goose Creek Monthly Meeting
Alexandria Monthly Meeting
Centre Quarterly Meeting
Alexandria Monthly Meeting
Baltimore Yearly Meeting
Baltimore Yearly Meeting
Gettysburg Monthly Meeting
Patapsco Monthly Meeting
Baltimore Monthly Meeting (Stony Run)
Baltimore Monthly Meeting (Homewood)
Baltimore Monthly Meeting (Stony Run)
BYM Young Adult Friends
Maury River Monthly Meeting
BYM Ad-Hoc Committee on Gender and Sexual Diversity Concerns
Patapsco Monthly Meeting
Pipe Creek Monthly Meeting
Menallen Monthly Meeting
Floyd Monthly Meeting
Roanoke Monthly Meeting
Hopewell Centre Monthly Meeting
Langley Hill Monthly Meeting
Patuxent Monthly Meeting

APPENDIX B: CHANGES IN MEETINGS

In the years since our 1st edition, Baltimore Yearly Meeting has laid down two monthly meetings, both of which contributed to earlier editions - Quaker Lake (laid down 2010) and Fishertown (laid down 2010), and has accepted two others - Abingdon, Va. (accepted 2009) and Monongalia, WVa. (2011). Our worship groups and preparative meetings, of which there are at present seven, and indulged meetings of which there are two, conduct monthly meetings for business with their affiliated monthly meeting. Virginia Half-Years Meeting was laid down in 2000.

APPENDIX C: OVERVIEW OF THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

In the beginning, we hosted an interest group at Baltimore Yearly Meeting Annual Session, 1992. It was well attended and many thought is best to continue to labor with the subject within the formal structure of the Yearly Meeting through an ad hoc committee. Approval for this came in 1993. The original charge, that of gathering, compiling and distributing information was seen as a way to give new life to the Yearly Meeting's minute in 1973, which called on Friends to dispel the myths and misunderstandings surrounding homosexuality.

Originally, the Yearly Meeting listed only officers of ad hoc committees in its Yearbook as its Nominating Committee did not select members of these. Rather, each kept lists of those Friends who were concerned and considered themselves led to be involved in the ad hoc's charge.(Beginning in 2005, members, while still self-selected have been listed) For this reason, the list below is incomplete. Nevertheless, it is safe to state that, since its inception, the Committee's profile has been an inclusive one. Friends young and old, allied through witness, personal struggle, profession, gender adherence or choice, or simply in a deep belief in continuing revelation of God's Truth have been present.

Committee clerks, co-clerks, recording clerks and conveners.

Margaret Stambaugh, Lamar Mathew, Bonnie Stockslager, Aron Teel, Dennis Hartzell and Katherine Smith

Committee Members and Correspondents

Maria Bradley	Sandy Spring
Betty Brody	Alexandria
William "Bill" Carroll.....	Williamsburg
Nancy Clark	Baltimore, Homewood
Tom Cooke.....	Washington
Karen Day	Floyd
Inga Erickson	Herndon
Georgia Fuller	Langley Hill
Hugh Fuller	Langley Hill
Martha Gay	Adelphi
Alessa Giampaolo	Baltimore, Stony Run
Laura Goren	Baltimore, Homewood
Stuart Greene	Patapsco
James "Ted" Heck.....	Richmond
Joshua "Josh" Humphries	Charlottesville
Joseph "Joe" Izzo	Washington
Lamar Matthew	York
Brad Ogilvie.....	Takoma Park
Sylvia Oliva	Annapolis
Lauri Perman.....	State College
Robert Neal Peterson	Shepherdstown
Rebecca Richards	Gunpowder
Riley Robinson.....	Washington
Tom Ryan.....	tate College
Katherine Smith	Maury River
Margaret Stambaugh.....	Gettysburg
Bonnie Stockslager	Herndon
Aron Teel	Charlottesville
Kerry Wiessmann.....	State College

**APPENDIX D: POLITICAL JURISDICTIONS REPRESENTED
WITHIN BALTIMORE YEARLY MEETING, MARCH 2011**

District of Columbia — Friends Meeting of Washington

Maryland — Adelphi, Annapolis, Baltimore Monthly Meeting-Homewood, Baltimore Monthly Meeting-Stony Run, Bethesda, Deer Creek, Frederick, Gunpowder, Little Falls, Patapsco, Patuxent, Pipe Creek, Sandy Spring

Pennsylvania — Carlisle, Dunnings Creek, Gettysburg, Little Britain, Menallen, Nottingham, State College, Warrington, West Branch, York

Virginia — Abingdon, Alexandria, Blacksburg, Charlottesville, Floyd, Goose Creek, Herndon, Hopewell Centre, Langley Hill, Maury River, Midlothian, Richmond, Roanoke, Valley, Williamsburg

MINUTES AND OTHER ACTIONS ON

SAME GENDER MARRIAGE

AND OTHER

GENDER AND SEXUAL DIVERSITY CONCERNS

WITHIN

BALTIMORE YEARLY MEETING

1973 TO 2011

for the Lord has come to teach his people himself by his spirit

George Fox

COMPILED BY THE *AD HOC* COMMITTEE ON GENDER AND SEXUAL DIVERSITY CONCERNS

3RD EDITION 2011