II. Faith // B. Life of the Spirit//10. Home Life

B. Quaker Marriage

Marriage is a joyful, serious, and lasting commitment based in love. Early Friends believed that marriage was based upon a spiritual leading from God, therefore no priest or minister was needed to sanctify the marriage. To this day, Friends marry each other without an intermediary. A wedding is at once the occasion for the partners to enter in to matrimony and the monthly meeting's act of witness and loving support of the marriage.

Marriage is carried out in the context of traditional Quaker worship. The wedding begins with a brief overview for those who may not be familiar with the process. Then, everyone present enters in to worship. When ready, the partners stand to share their vows; they sign their marriage certificate, and it is read aloud. Worship continues with messages and prayers of support and love for the couple shared out of the silence. At the rise of meeting, each person present, including children, signs the wedding certificate as witness to the commitment made signifying their ongoing support. The certificate is usually a beautiful calligraphed document that is framed and hung in the home.

When people wish to marry under the care of the meeting, they write a letter to the clerk of the monthly meeting. A clearness committee is appointed to meet with them to help them explore issues related to their relationship and their future together. When both the couple and the committee are clear that all is in good order, it is reported back to the meeting for business and a marriage committee helps with planning and organizing the wedding. Occasionally a decision is made that it is not the right time for marriage.

From the beginning, Friends have emphasized equality of marriage partners. In 1849, Lucretia Mott said that "in the marriage union, the independence of the husband and wife will be equal, their dependence mutual, and their obligations reciprocal." The roles and responsibilities of each partner within a marriage may change over time and differ in each relationship. BYM Friends remain committed to the principle of marriage equality between two partners, and most BYM monthly meetings embrace marriage without regard to gender.

The many details around clearness committee responsibilities and the process of preparing for and conducting a wedding are included in Section III (The Quaker Wedding and Marriage).

III. Practices and Procedures//B. The Monthly Meeting //6. Marriage Under the Care of the Meeting -- renamed The Quaker Wedding and Marriage

(moving Appendix F up to this section so that all aspects of marriage are located in one place for ease of reference)

6. The Quaker Wedding and Marriage

Marriage, as understood by Friends, is a relationship involving two individuals, Spirit, and the faith community that witnesses, recognizes, and supports it. We call this marriage of Friends "under the care of meeting." Seek to be guided by Spirit in contemplating this important step.

The religious dimension of marriage includes the understanding that we will seek unity with leading of the Spirit and we will take this opportunity to practice love. The love of one another to which we are called is always a journey, a work in progress. Marriage involves a mutual commitment to share life, following a path of love together, requiring growth, integrity, and mutual respect.

Those considering marriage under the care of the meeting should closely review the process recommended below to gain a clear understanding of the process. See Section 10 for an overview of responsibilities of those who are marrying, the monthly meeting clerk, the clearness committee, the marriage committee, and the meeting community.

1. Questions to Consider When Requesting Marriage Under the Care of the Meeting

When Friends are considering marriage under the care of the meeting, it is recommended that they discuss the following questions. A clearness committee may also use some of these questions in the clearness process. Each partner is unique in their background and experiences. These questions are meant to be a guide; they may not be relevant for everyone. Other topics may arise that are not specifically addressed. Let Spirit guide you, not words.

Beliefs, values, and spiritual grounding

a. Do we feel spiritually led to marry? Are we open to seeking Divine assistance both when things are going well and when we encounter difficulties?
b. Do we consider vows made "in the presence of God and these our friends" to be binding?
c. What are our plans for nurturing the spiritual basis of our marriage? Do we understand and have sympathy for one another's religious beliefs?
d. What values and beliefs do we hold in common? On what matters do we differ?
e. Do we see each other and treat each other as equals? Do we have the willingness to listen to each other and to strive for open communication?

Partnership

a. Do we share interests which we can enjoy together? Do we respect each other's individual interests?
b. Paraphrasing John Woolman's words, "Do we delight in each other's happiness?"
c. How do we feel about each other's economic and cultural background?
d. Will our professional or family obligations mean that we are apart for short or long periods of time? How will we handle the challenges of these separations?
e. How will we uphold and strengthen the relationship with the passage of time?

f. For those with prior partnerships: Do we have unfinished emotional business with our previous partner(s) that can productively be brought to completion? Are there failures whose acknowledgment might open the way to apologies and forgiveness, the healing of wounds, and new beginnings?

Sexuality

a. Have we explored our attitudes toward sexuality and respect for monogamy?
b. Have we discussed how we will express our individual sexualities in our marriage?
c. What desires do we have in common and where do we differ?
d. What are our opinions on contraception and abortion?

Conflict

a. Do we know each other's habits, likes, and dislikes? Are we ready to make adjustments and address, with kindness and understanding, areas of possible conflict?
b. Have we considered together how we will work to reconcile inevitable differences?
c. Are we willing to make a strong commitment to permanence in our marriage?
d. Are we open to seeking outside help if such support seems warranted?

Children

a. Have we explored our attitudes and visions for family life, including how many children we want (if any) and whether we might consider adoption or foster care?
b. How might our family reflect Friends' testimonies of simplicity and of stewardship of the earth?
c. What are our expectations about how we will raise, discipline, and educate our children?
d. For those with children already: How will we co-parent with our children's other parents going forward? How do we envision relationships among children we may already have and our new partner? How do we envision that any children we may have together will relate with our other children?

Finances and responsibilities

a. Do we share each other's attitudes on earning, spending and saving money, and the handling of finances and debt?
b. How are family responsibilities to be shared?
c. Are there prior obligations—legal, financial or both—that need to be met? If we do not obtain a marriage license, how will we protect each other's legal rights?

Family and friends

a. How do we react to each other's parents, children, friends, and relatives?
b. How will we balance the needs of our marriage with our friendships and responsibilities outside the home, such as work, volunteer activities, and education?
c. Are parents and other significant friends and family members supportive of our choice to marry? If not, have their concerns been considered?
d. How do we intend to keep close relations with family members who may live far away, especially in cases of illness or old age?

Relationship to the monthly meeting

a. Why are we asking for marriage under the care of the meeting?
b. What do we anticipate our relationship with the meeting to be in our life together?
c. Are we aware that care of our marriage by the meeting involves a continuing concern for our life together and the values established in our home? Will we welcome the continuing concern of the meeting?

Wedding plans

a. What traditions and beliefs (religious, cultural, familial) are important to us? Do we want to incorporate them in to the traditional Quaker ceremony?
b. Who (family, friends, community) do we want to include in the process of planning how our wedding will be accomplished? What traditions, beliefs, and values might they hope to see represented as we formalize our commitment in the wedding? How might they differ from the traditional Quaker ceremony? How will we work to reconcile any difference of tradition, belief, or values that might arise?
c. How do we feel about expenses for a wedding, reception, and honeymoon? Are our plans in harmony with Quaker testimonies and our own values?
d. Who (family, friends, community) do we want present at our wedding as participants? What roles do we see for them? Do the people we are including in the process of planning our wedding have feelings about this that need to be addressed?
e. Typically all members and attenders of a monthly meeting are invited to a meeting for worship for marriage. How will this affect the planning of our wedding?
f. Do we want to hold a reception following the wedding ceremony? What would that look like? Note that typically alcoholic beverages are not served at meeting houses.

In conclusion

Do we know each other well enough to have considered all of the above questions frankly and openly? If not, may we wait—six months, a year—before proceeding with marriage?

2. Starting the Process

The partners write a letter to the clerk of the monthly meeting under whose care they wish to be married. See Section 10a, Responsibilities of the Persons to be Married, for suggested content of the letter. It is best if the proposed wedding date is at least three to six months in the future to allow the meeting time to fulfill its responsibilities. The clerk forwards the letter of request to the appropriate standing committee (usually ministry and pastoral care, or care and counsel), which will name a clearness committee, usually of two or three members. Some meetings establish the clearness committee at business meeting.

3. The Clearness Process

As it relates to Quaker marriage, the term “clearness” historically referred to clearness from other marriage commitments. Today, the clearness committee for a marriage also explores with the couple what it takes to achieve the permanence and satisfaction of a committed, loving relationship, and the extent to which the partners are prepared for the dedication and constancy such a relationship requires.

The clearness committee meets privately with the partners in a spirit of loving concern as many times as necessary. The clearness committee members ask thoughtful questions, listen carefully, and leave space for worship. Please see Section 1 above for queries that you may wish to explore with them. If concerns about the relationship arise during the clearness process, it is important for committee members to speak candidly, recognizing that failure to speak truth with kindness is to risk possible suffering.

The clearness committee does its best to confirm in the partners a true leading to marry. If both people and the clearness committee are clear about their leading to marry, the committee reports the recommendation that the monthly meeting take the proposed marriage under its care to the standing committee that appointed it.

There may occasionally be a situation where clearness is not reached. If either the partners or members of the clearness committee do not feel clear, the committee and the couple will address the concerns and issues. This situation may require additional time for the clearness process, or taking a break with agreement to come back after some interval. It is possible that one partner may feel uneasy, and more time must be allowed.

Clearness for older, widowed, or divorced Friends merits special attention. They bring a special set of issues to the relationship. The clearness committee needs to be sensitive to the complexities of these relationships, and attend to the special concerns raised by the joining of two families.

Specific responsibilities of the clearness committee are outlined in Section 10c, Responsibilities of the Clearness Committee.

4. Monthly Meeting Approval

A recommendation that the marriage be held under the care of the monthly meeting is presented by the standing committee to business meeting for approval. Some monthly meetings require that the request be held over for a month after the first presentation to the business meeting.

5. The Marriage Committee

The marriage committee is responsible for ensuring that the wedding is carried out with dignity, reverence, and simplicity, in the manner of Friends. Those appointed also accept personal responsibility for upholding the meeting's continuing concern for the marriage, and, as possible, for remaining in touch with the couple after the wedding and reaching out from time to time. Marriage partners who are not members of the meeting are welcomed in to the life of the meeting and are invited to attend meetings for worship and business and other meeting activities. See Section 10d, Responsibilities of the Marriage Committee below.

6. The Marriage Vows

The traditional Quaker marriage vow is:

> *In the presence of God, and of these our Friends, I _____, take thee ____ to be my [partner, spouse, husband, wife] promising with Divine assistance to be a loving and faithful [partner, spouse, husband, wife] as long as we both shall live.*

The couple will want to review and discuss these vows to decide if they wish to modify them. Any significant changes to the marriage vows can be reviewed with the clearness committee or marriage committee for approval.

7. The Marriage Certificate

Below is the traditional wording of the marriage certificate. It may be modified as the couple wish to reflect their terminology for one another. At a minimum, the certificate includes the full names of the couple; name and location (city and state) of the monthly meeting; date of the wedding; statement of the vows exchanged; signatures of the couple; and the signatures of all in attendance.

If a couple wishes for a certificate with substantially different wording from the standard form below, they will make this known as early as possible to the clearness committee and/or marriage committee. If this committee feels the changes are substantive, the changes may need to be brought to the attention of the appropriate standing committee for approval.

A Friends' marriage certificate is typically prepared by hand by someone with calligraphic skills using archival paper and permanent ink.

> *Whereas [full name] of [City, State], [son/daughter/child] of [parent name] and [parent name] of [City, State] and [full name] of [City, State], [daughter/son/child] of [parent name] and [parent name] of [City, State], having declared their intentions to marry each other to ____Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends held at [City, State], according to the good order used among them, this meeting allowed their proposed marriage.*
>
> *Now this is to certify that for the accomplishment of their marriage, this __day of the __month, in the year ___, they, [full name] and [full name], appeared in a meeting for worship of the Religious Society of Friends, held at _____Meeting, and [first name], taking [first name] by the hand, did on this solemn occasion declare that [he/she/they] took [first name], to be [his/her/their] [partner/spouse/husband/wife] promising with Divine assistance to be unto [him/her/them] a loving and faithful [partner/spouse/husband/wife] so long as they both shall live; and then in the same assembly [first name] did in like manner declare that [he/she/they] took [him/her/them], [first name], to be [his/her/their] [partner/spouse/husband/wife], promising with Divine assistance to be unto [him/her/them] a loving and faithful [partner/spouse/husband/wife] so long as they both shall live. And moreover, they did as further confirmation thereof, then and there, to this certificate set their hands.*
>
> *[spaces for signatures of couple, with the names they will use after the wedding]*
>
> *And we, having been present at the marriage, have as witnesses set our hands.*

8. Customary Sequence of Events at a Quaker Wedding

The meeting for marriage is a traditional meeting for worship with some programmed elements. The usual sequence of events (subject to change by request of the couple and consent of the marriage committee) is as follows:

1) If music is desired, it is played or sung during the period when people are gathering.
2) At the hour appointed for the start of the meeting, the marriage committee and the wedding party enter and take their seats.
3) After a few moments of settling, a designated person rises to explain the purpose of the meeting, its nature as a Quaker meeting for worship, and of a Quaker wedding specifically (see 9. Introducing Weddings, below, for suggested wording).
4) The meeting then settles in to silent worship.
5) Following a period of silence, as long or as short as the couple is led to observe, the couple stand, face each other and join hands. Each recites to the other their vows in a loud clear voice so all may hear.
6) If there are rings, the couple exchange these after their vows. A kiss is often exchanged at this time.
7) The couple sit down and the marriage certificate table is brought before them for their signatures.
8) The signed certificate is then read aloud by a designated person to the meeting in its entirety, including the signatures just appended.
9) The certificate table is then moved away.
10) The meeting settles in again to a period of worship during which those who are moved to speak do so. The meeting is closed by the designated person.
11) After the wedding company withdraws, all wedding guests (including children) sign the certificate under the supervision of designated persons. If desired, spaces may be reserved for the signatures of the wedding company, marriage committee, and family.

9. Introducing Weddings

Some meetings have used the following language in introducing the meeting for marriage. Friends are urged to take it as a guide, making whatever modifications seem appropriate.

> *Friends, We are gathered here today in a meeting for worship to witness the marriage of _____ and _____. They have asked me to say a few words about what will happen, especially for those who have not experienced a Quaker meeting for worship.*
>
> *When Friends gather for worship, they come together sure in the knowledge that God, also called by some the Inner Light, the Truth, Love, or the Spirit of Christ, will be with us. You are invited to join us in the silent power of this corporate worship.*
>
> *Because your presence and attention are requested, and to avoid distracting others, we ask that you not take photographs during the worship. There will be plenty of time later for that.*
>
> *_____ and _____ have asked me to extend a special welcome to young children, who are encouraged to stay with us as long as is comfortable for them and their parents. Whenever they may prefer it, children are welcome to join in the child care, which is being provided _____[insert location]_____ .*
>
> *When these comments are finished, we will settle together in to a period of silent worship. When they are ready, _____ and _____ will stand and, facing each other, exchange their marriage vows. In the manner of Friends, they will join themselves in marriage*

without the intercession of a minister or other official. After the vows are spoken, the marriage certificate will be brought for them to sign. When _____ and _____ have signed the certificate, it will be read aloud to us by _____ and returned to its place.

At that time we will enter again in to a period of corporate worship, opening our hearts to the joy of this occasion and reflecting upon our hopes and prayers for _____ and for _____ and for their life together. Out of this second period of silent worship, it may be that some are led by the Spirit to offer a message out of the silence. If you are so led today please stand and speak loudly and clearly so all may hear allowing a period of silence after any previous message so it may settle. Please do not hurry; we will have enough time. Once the time is right, worship will be closed by shaking hands. At that time please remain in your seats until you are invited to sign the wedding certificate.

Let us now enter in to the silence with _____ and _____ with joy and expectation.

10. Overview of Responsibilities

To promote clarity and mutual understanding, the duties and responsibilities of the several persons involved are outlined separately below. Please review these outlines in conjunction with the preceding text.

a. Responsibilities of the Persons to be Married

1) Write a letter, signed by both persons, to the monthly meeting under whose care they wish to be married. The letter at a minimum can read something like the following:
   We intend to marry and request marriage under the care of _____ Meeting. We have discussed the "Questions to Consider When Requesting Marriage Under the Care of the Meeting." Our proposed marriage date is __/__/__ . (Allow a proposed date at least three to six months in the future).
2) Meet with a clearness committee to explore their leading to marry. This may involve more than one session.
3) Review the traditional marriage vows and discuss any proposed changes.
4) Identify persons who might serve on the marriage committee.
5) Finalize date and mail out invitations only *after* approval has been granted by the monthly meeting.
6) Meet with the marriage committee to discuss plans for the wedding.
7) Identify persons to introduce and conclude the meeting for worship for marriage and to read the marriage certificate.
8) Have any changes to the language of the vows and marriage certificate approved by the standing committee or monthly meeting.
9) Have the certificate prepared in ample time for the marriage.
10) Become informed, with the assistance of the marriage committee, of all legal requirements and forms used in the state in which the marriage is to take place.
11) Arrange to secure the marriage license (if applicable) and provide it to the marriage committee prior to the wedding.
12) Commit to memory the vows to be made.
13) Sign the marriage certificate after the vows have been made.

b. Responsibilities of the Monthly Meeting Clerk

1) Present the letter of request to marry to the appropriate standing committee (usually pastoral care or care and counsel) at the earliest opportunity. That committee will assure that a committee for clearness is appointed.
2) Arrange for presentation by the standing committee of the clearness committee's report at the next monthly meeting for business following receipt of their report.
3) After the report has been accepted and the marriage under the care of the meeting approved by the monthly meeting, ensure that the meeting names a marriage committee.
4) Inform the couple that the marriage under the care of the meeting has been approved and that they can next meet with the marriage committee.
5) Following the wedding, ensure that the marriage committee reports to the meeting for business.

c. Responsibilities of the Clearness Committee

1) Arrange to meet with the couple privately, in a spirit of loving concern, at least once, and as many more times as is deemed necessary.
2) Learn whether both are clear of any other commitment that is inconsistent with the intended marriage.
3) Discuss their responses to the "Questions to Consider When Requesting Marriage Under the Care of the Meeting" (Section 1).
4) Check that the welfare and rights of any children by a former marriage have been properly considered and legally secured.
5) Review the conduct of a Quaker wedding, including customary wording of the vows and the marriage certificate.
6) Discuss the Quaker regard for reverence, dignity, and simplicity in the meeting for marriage and reception.
7) Discuss the specific date, time, and location of the wedding to be included in the report to business meeting.
8) Explain the functions of the marriage committee with whom the couple will discuss wedding arrangements, including that the role of the marriage committee is to provide continuing care for the couple following the marriage.
9) Obtain suggestions from the couple of names for the marriage committee to be included in the report to the monthly meeting. Please include at least four persons on the marriage committee, of whom at least half should be meeting members.
10) Report to the standing committee that appointed it regarding the clearness of the couple for marriage, discussing any proposed substantive changes to the vows and certificate. The committee (usually pastoral care or care and counsel) that named the clearness committee then presents a recommendation to business meeting that the marriage under the care of the meeting be approved, including the proposed date, time, and location for the wedding, and the suggested members of the marriage committee.

d. Responsibilities of the Marriage Committee

1) Arrange to meet with the couple in a timely fashion.
2) Make clear the committee's availability to the couple to help them before, during, and after the wedding with ongoing responsibility for continuing care for the marriage.

3) At the first meeting of the committee plan a rehearsal date, ideally with all members of the wedding party.
4) Make sure that the wedding site is reserved for the rehearsal and wedding; make sure that the reception site is reserved if appropriate.
5) Review Section 8: "Customary Sequence of Events at a Quaker Marriage Ceremony."
6) Review and approve the vows the couple will exchange at the wedding and the language of the marriage certificate, making sure that the vows are exactly reflected in the certificate.
7) Discuss the Quaker regard for reverence, dignity, and simplicity in the meeting for marriage and reception. If the couple desires to include elements from other faith traditions check they are in keeping with the simplicity of a meeting for worship. Discuss proposed decorations, music, or any arrangements desired by the couple. Remind the couple that photographs are not to be taken during the meeting for worship. Express the meeting's hope that simplicity will also be observed at any reception held.
8) Determine who will introduce and conclude the meeting. Discuss what will be communicated by this person at the beginning of the meeting for worship. See Section 9 "Introducing Weddings" above.
9) Determine who will read the certificate. (This person does not need to be a member of the meeting or of this committee.) Let the person selected to read the certificate have an opportunity to read it in advance.
10) Discuss whether or not there will be a handout that provides an overview of the Quaker meeting for marriage, and, if so, how it will be produced and distributed.
11) Decide upon any special seating arrangements, if desired, for families and friends of the couple.
12) Be aware of local laws related to Quaker marriages and communicate this to the couple. Make sure that the marriage license and wedding certificate have been secured, that needed signatures can be obtained on the license, and that all legal requirements will be met (as applicable).
13) Ensure that weights for the certificate, working pens with permanent ink, and a portable table are available for the certificate.
14) Arrange for assistance for those present to sign the certificate after the wedding.
15) Attend the rehearsal.
16) After the wedding:
    a) Arrange for the care of the marriage certificate, give it to the meeting recorder to copy for the meeting records, retrieve it from the recorder, and return it to the couple.
    b) Obtain the needed signatures on the marriage license and mail or deliver it to the proper authorities.
    c) Report to the business meeting whether the marriage has been suitably accomplished, whether legal requirements were satisfied, and any name changes resulting from the marriage.

11. Care of Marriages and Families

The monthly meeting accepts the responsibility to support a marriage under the care of the meeting in years to come. We celebrate the deepening of marriage relationships over time, and we try to remain attentive to the struggles and concerns that also emerge.

Care of a marriage may occur through regular, supportive interaction with the couple by members of their marriage committee, by a group of couples providing mutual support, by outreach from elders or members of a committee, or simply through loving attention from friends in the meeting. The meeting may also benefit from the ministry of Friends who offer workshops to help families and couples grow in the Spirit and by having helpful books in the meeting library.

Sometimes Friends believe they want to respect the privacy of the couple or family; at other times the couple does not let anyone know of their need for support. But it is the mark of a true community to pay attention. Denial of the existence of problems and concerns is not an expression of care. Friends may not be able to resolve conflicts or see a way forward; but the single act of paying attention can create a supportive environment to explore problems and concerns.

Frequently only one person in a couple regularly attends meeting. In these situations, meeting involvements can affect relationships. Meetings should be mindful of supporting these couples.

Queries for Meetings

The following queries may be helpful for monthly meetings and marriage committees:

a. Does the meeting offer resources and events to help couples nurture their relationship?
b. In what ways do we as a community celebrate relationships and support couples enduring stressful times?
c. Are we attentive to “distress signals”? Are we able to respond to them lovingly and non-judgmentally?

12. Marriages in Distress

Many marriages end in separation or divorce. These situations present challenges to Quaker meetings as they seek to show care and support for the couple and their children. If there is a conflict within a marriage, the couple is encouraged to seek assistance early, long before differences become irreconcilable. This may take the form of a request to meet with their marriage committee, to meet with a clearness committee, and/or to receive counseling.

Meetings are advised to recognize their role as providing spiritual support. If there is a need for professional counseling, this assistance can be sought outside the meeting. The meeting is encouraged to maintain a list of qualified counselors who understand Quaker values, as a reference for couples who may desire professional help.

In general, it is important that the meeting supports both people and that both feel welcome at meeting for worship. Members of the meeting, especially those who serve on committees that provide pastoral care, strive to keep open lines of communication, avoid blaming individuals, and help each individual act with integrity. Confidentiality is essential.

Not all marriages end peacefully; some unions may end because of physical and/or emotional abuse, toxicity, or power inequality. Special consideration must be given in these circumstances.

The abused partner may need the support of their spiritual home more than ever. When there is clear evidence of abuse, meetings may discern that the safest and most loving course is to ask the abusive partner to seek worship elsewhere, or find creative solutions to offer support and worship.

The meeting's role is to support everyone in the family (including children). When there are children involved, the meeting will take care to ensure that they are welcome and feel the loving and practical support of the meeting. Children may feel bewildered, blame themselves for the difficulties their parents are experiencing, or feel caught in the middle.

If, ultimately, the couple decides to divorce, the couple may want to meet with a clearness committee to consider how the meeting can support them.

Queries for the couple:

a. Are you open to seeking spiritual support through a clearness process or asking for professional help?
b. Do you seek to keep the Spirit as a vital force in your life to help you deal with the changes that come with separation or divorce?
c. Do you avoid hurting your former spouse through your relationships with others, either in or out of the meeting?

Queries for couples with children:

a. As individuals, are you committed to the reality that you are both still parents of your children and must continue to find creative ways of fulfilling this responsibility?
b. Are you mindful of your children's need to continue a loving relationship with each parent?
c. Are you mindful of your children's response to the stress in your family?
d. Can you avoid both shutting your children out of your own pain and leaning on them too much?
e. Are you mindful of the special love between children and grandparents or extended family, and do you endeavor to further strengthen these ties?

Queries for meetings:

a. Does the meeting actively and sensitively reach out to married persons or couples who may be troubled?
b. Is the meeting willing to work to maintain an open perspective regarding the difficulties in the marriage?
c. Is the meeting providing ongoing spiritual and practical support for stability and continuity to children during this difficult time?
d. If the meeting finds itself too emotionally involved to help, will it consider calling on another monthly meeting, its quarterly meeting, or yearly meeting for aid?

13. Marriages Not Under the Care of the Meeting

Marriage of Members Elsewhere

When meeting members are married elsewhere, it is requested that they inform the meeting of their marriage. Meeting will ask members to contact the newly married couple to express the meeting's congratulations to the couple.

Marriages of Friends from Other Meetings

Sometimes meetings will be asked to host a wedding for Friends from other meetings who wish to be married there, but to have the marriage remain under the care of their home meeting. Good communication between the two meetings can help ensure an appropriate wedding.

Marriage in the Manner of Friends

Some meetings require that at least one of the persons to be married be a member or attender well known to the community. Meetings are encouraged to consider in advance if they are willing and able to offer marriage in other circumstances.

If partners, who are neither members nor attenders, request a marriage under the care of the meeting, the meeting may feel clear to offer them a wedding "in the manner of Friends." These marriages do not require ongoing support of the marriage from the meeting. In some circumstances, meetings may offer a legal marriage, for example, for persons known to the meeting who live far away or for children of members who no longer attend meeting as adults.

The couple should be made fully aware of the nature and procedures for a Friends meeting for worship for marriage.