

MINUTE ON SAME GENDER MARRIAGE

(Approved Meeting for Worship for the Conduct of Business 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 woman and a man 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 for 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. (see next page for history)

HISTORY OF ADELPHI FRIENDS MEETING'S CONSIDERATION OF LESBIAN & GAY CONCERN

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 creating 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 the 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 steps of our process through these stages are discussed below.

In the early 1980's, the Ministry and Oversight Committee (a precursor to today's Ministry & Worship and Pastoral Care Committees) was asked what their response would be if a same-gender couple requested marriage under the care of the Meeting. At that time, the hypothetical nature of the request made it difficult for the members to reach agreement on what a same-gender marriage meant to Meeting.

In early 1988, a discussion (second hour) was held after Meeting for Worship to simply open up dialogue in the community on the relationship between the Meeting and the lesbians, gays, and bisexuals among us. This second hour was very well attended. Those who were supportive believed that they were in the minority. They discovered in the second hour that most of Meeting was supportive. A few members with reservations spoke and were open to learning more about the concern. During this time there were no openly lesbian, gay or bisexuals at Meeting. After the second hour, literature was made available and information on the concern was included in our monthly newsletter.

A subcommittee was formed in the spring of 1989, under the Ministry and Worship Committee, to organize a six week series of workshops. These workshops were on: stereotypes about lesbians, gays and bisexuals; relevant passages of the Bible; previous minutes by Friends on this concern; and consciousness-raising exercises on same-gender orientations -- these exercises had a significant effect on some Friends. Each of these workshops had a different facilitator, all of whom were members or active attenders.

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The last stage began when Adelphi Friends was asked to sponsor a volunteer under the Quaker Volunteer Witness (QVW) program. This matter was referred to the Peace and Social Order Committee. Meeting and Committee discussion on QVW requirements as they pertained to lesbians and gays led to agreement on the need to develop a process for the consideration of this issue.

A second subcommittee was formed, under the care **of the Peace and Social Order Committee**. This **subcommittee reached agreement on developing a draft minute on this concern**. The subcommittee was formed with members from the Ministry and Worship, Pastoral Care, **and Peace and Socials Order Committees, as well as** members of the workshop series subcommittee. In time, the subcommittee believed that the crux of the concern centered around same-gender marriage under the care of the Meeting. At this time, Meeting wanted to consider same-gender marriage under the care of the Meeting before a couple applied, since that would allow us to discern our leading in the most open possible manner. Because marriage became the focus, the Meeting approved placing the subcommittee under the care of the Pastoral Care Committee.

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 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. Evolving drafts of the proposed minute were widely distributed after consideration by the Pastoral Care Committee and the Meeting for Worship for the Conduct of Business. During the entire process, progress was regularly discussed at Meeting for Worship for the Conduct of Business.

Pastoral Care approved the draft minute on February 21, 1991. It was then taken to Meeting for Worship for the Conduct of Business on March 10th. The clerk of Pastoral Care read the draft minute, led a brief discussion, and requested that it be held over. The minute was brought back to the May 12th business meeting and approved.

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