

# FAITH & PRACTICE - COVENANT RELATIONSHIPS

The first five paragraphs of the section are unchanged, and not shown.

Beginning with the sixth paragraph of the section, located on page 38, the section will appear as follows:

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Love reaches further than words, and we experience the Spirit long before any words. The family is a precious spiritual community, and we rejoice and are nourished in homes full of friendliness, refreshment, and peace, where God becomes real to those who live there and to all who visit. We joyfully acknowledge the sustaining, enriching presence of loving unions among us, whether between persons of different or the same gender, and we want the meeting's strength to undergird these covenants.

Some of us live alone and find love and community among our friends. Some of us are single parents, caring for our children. Some members' families follow traditional patterns; others do not. Many monthly meetings honor committed gay and lesbian relationships and take same sex marriages under our care, following the practice of the monthly meeting. Just as there is that of God in every person, there is that of God in every relationship that calls upon God. We seek to treat responsible, loving relationships tenderly and respectfully. We seek to hold each other in the light of our ideal that Spirit-filled covenant relationships are the one sure basis for love and sexuality.

In prayer and worship, each meeting can speak truthfully to the particular needs and difficulties of its members and their relationships. Through committees of clearness, for example, a meeting can respond with great care and concern to the requests for marriage that come before it, following the marriage procedures described elsewhere in this book.

Marriage is a covenant intended for life. Families need the support of monthly meetings and their marriage-oversight committees long after the wedding vows are spoken. These groups can support the couple, offering to help explore options and seek constructive solutions with waiting and prayer. The partners should be encouraged not to give up their commitments easily. However, some relationships can be unwise or become unhealthy, even psychologically or physically abusive. We urge Friends to treat conflict in relationships, separation, and divorce among members with the same careful concern for clearness as they use before marriage.

**NOTE: SAME TEXT, SHOWN WITH EDITS INDICATED**

New text is indicated in square brackets and in bold. Deleted text is shown by strikethrough font.

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Love reaches further than words, and we experience the Spirit long before any words. The family is a precious spiritual community, and we rejoice and are nourished in homes full of friendliness, refreshment, and peace, where God becomes real to those who live there and to all who visit. We joyfully acknowledge the sustaining, enriching presence of loving unions among us, **[whether between persons of different or the same gender]** and we want the meeting's strength to undergird these covenants.

~~God has created no man or woman even nearly perfect. But we grow in both our virtue and our capacity to love by the testing, against the world and each other, of those weaknesses which by the grace of God we can convert into strengths; and by the finding of those strengths and beauties in each other which we hardly dared suspect were there. But these are the rewards of unfolding years; years, not weeks or months. The glory of a great marriage lies in the surprises which loving support, acceptance, and graceful forgiveness can bring forth.~~

*—R.B. Crowell, "Words at a Quaker Wedding,"  
Friends Journal, 11/74*

Some of us live alone and find love and community among our friends. Some of us are single parents, caring for our children. Some members' families follow traditional patterns; others do not. **[Many monthly meetings honor committed gay and lesbian relationships and take same sex marriages under our care, following the practice of the monthly meeting.]** Just as there is that of God in every person, there is that of God in every relationship that calls upon God. We seek to treat responsible, loving relationships tenderly and respectfully. We seek to hold each other in the light of our ideal that Spirit-filled covenant relationships are the one sure basis for love and sexuality.

In prayer and worship, each meeting can speak truthfully to the particular needs and difficulties of its members and their relationships. Through committees of clearness, for example, a meeting can respond with great care and concern to the requests for marriage that come before it, following the marriage procedures described **[elsewhere in this book.]** ~~in the Practice and Procedure section of this book of discipline. The monthly meeting can also advise and counsel those who are overwhelmed by social pressures and confused by our culture's conflicting attitudes toward sexual morality.~~

Marriage is a covenant intended for life[.], ~~and it is with deep sorrow that we note divorce among members. Separation and divorce are spiritually, psychologically, and sometimes physically devastating for children.~~ Families need the support of monthly meetings and their marriage-oversight committees long after the wedding vows are spoken. These groups can support the couple, offering to help explore options and seek constructive solutions with waiting and prayer. The partners should be encouraged not to give up their commitments easily. However, some relationships can be unwise or become unhealthy, even psychologically or physically abusive. We urge Friends to treat conflict in relationships, separation, and divorce among members with the same careful concern for clearness as they use before marriage.