

FRIENDS MEETING AT CAMBRIDGE BOOK OF CURRENT PRACTICE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES (FORMERLY APPENDICES)

JUNE 2017

Contents

MEMBERSHIP	3
RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERSHIP	3
PROCEDURES FOR JOINING FMC	4
JUNIOR MEMBERSHIP AT FRIENDS MEETING AT CAMBRIDGE	7
PROCEDURES FOR FRIENDS LEAVING OR NO LONGER RESIDENT AT FMC	8
MEMBERSHIP RECORDS	10
MARRIAGE.....	10
PROCEDURES FOR MARRIAGE UNDER THE CARE OF THE MEETING.....	10
CHECKLIST FOR WEDDING DETAILS	14
GUIDELINES FOR USE OF THE MEETING HOUSE FOR MARRIAGES NOT UNDER THE CARE OF THE MEETING	15
CHECK LIST FOR CLERK	15
CHECK LIST FOR FACILITIES MANAGER.....	16
ADVANCE ARRANGEMENTS.....	17
CLERK'S INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS	17
ARRANGEMENTS ON THE DAY OF THE MEMORIAL.....	17
CLEARNESS AND SUPPORT COMMITTEES	18
CARE COMMITTEES	18
MINUTE ON CLEARNESS COMMITTEES (1977)	18
PROCEDURES FOR SETTING UP CARE COMMITTEES.....	19
GUIDELINES FOR CLEARNESS COMMITTEES	21
CARE COMMITTEE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS	23
COMMUNITY GUIDELINES	24
Harassment and/or Abuse	26

Miscommunications and Conflict	27
GUIDELINES FOR HOSTING AFTERTHOUGHTS	27
Notes from Membership Committee	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Notes from Ministry and Counsel	Error! Bookmark not defined.

MEMBERSHIP

RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERSHIP

MEETING FOR WORSHIP

The Meeting for Worship is the center of spiritual life. In the silence the world that time and sense have known falls off and leaves us and God alone. For it is in the silence that we can find God and sense the tendering that comes with this divine presence. And, it is in that gathered silence, that we seek to sustain together, that God can find us and minister to us and move us to minister to one another. From the Meeting for Worship we get the sense of unity with the spirit of the divine that enables us to walk in the Light as Children of the Light.

MEETING FOR BUSINESS

Each member is expected to attend and to share in the consideration of individual concerns and the arrangements necessary to carry on the activities of the Meeting. The Monthly Business Meeting in Worship meets on the Second Thursday of the Month at 7:00 PM September through November and April through June. It meets at 1:15 PM December through March and does not meet except in a called session in July and August.

Meetings for Business are conducted in the same spirit of waiting on divine leadings as Meetings for Worship. Differences of understanding are to be anticipated because some individuals are aroused to concern before others become aware of the need for action. Difference of opinion at the outset of considering a matter is a symptom of continued growth within the Meeting.

Action, however, on all matters is taken only after a sense of the Meeting is reached with no division into majorities and minorities. This requirement places a special responsibility on all Friends to keep in continuous touch with the Light within.

If unity is not reached after careful consideration, the matter is carried over to provide time for spiritual searching, further study, and presentation at later meetings.

Many matters are referred to standing or specially appointed committees and all members are expected to serve on behalf of the Meeting on such committees if the way seems open for them to do so. The committees and their functions are described in a previous chapter of these Practices.

ORGANIZATION

Friends Meeting at Cambridge is incorporated under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. It is one of the Monthly Meetings that together form Salem Quarterly Meeting, which in turn is one of the eight Quarterly Meetings that make up New England Yearly Meeting. New England Yearly Meeting is one of several Yearly Meetings that belong to both the Friends General Conference and the Friends United Meeting, as well as to the Friends World Committee for Consultation. Membership in this Meeting makes us also a member of these larger groupings of Friends.

CAMBRIDGE FRIENDS SCHOOL

Cambridge Friends School is an elementary school under the care of the Meeting, which serves children from prekindergarten through the eighth grade. The membership of the Meeting forms the corporation of the school and meets annually during a Meeting for Business. A majority of the trustees of the school must be members of the Religious Society of Friends.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Friends Meeting at Cambridge relies almost totally on contributions to support the many activities within our own Monthly Meeting and New England Yearly Meeting, remuneration to our staff, and maintenance of the property. No collection is taken at the Meeting for Worship. The Finance Committee prepares a yearly operating budget. After the Monthly Meeting adopts the budget, each member or family unit receives a letter in June, the beginning of the Meeting's fiscal year, accompanied by this budget and a reply card on which to indicate what they intend to contribute.

Checks can be made out to Friends Meeting at Cambridge, and mailed to the office at 5 Longfellow Park, Cambridge, MA 02138.

PROCEDURES FOR JOINING FMC

NEW REQUESTS FOR MEMBERSHIP IN FMC

Membership in the Religious Society of Friends (RSOF) is both a privilege and a responsibility. Ideally, it is the outward sign of an inner experience of God/Spirit or the prospective member's equivalent of such, and of unity with the Friends Meeting at Cambridge (FMC) community. It implies a commitment to enter wholeheartedly into the spiritual and corporate activities of the Religious Society of Friends (RSOF) and to assume responsibility for both service and support, as the way opens. Faith in God and an effort to follow the life and teachings of Jesus under the guidance and authority of the Light Within have been the traditional source of our Quaker faith and testimonies. Friends today find many other sources of inspiration as well. The RSOF should reach out to and welcome into active membership all who find unity with the principles and testimonies of Friends as reflected both in our ongoing spiritual life and in the Book of Faith and Practice of the New England Yearly Meeting (NEYM).

Some beloved and valuable members in the Meeting would not use some or all the above terms to describe their spiritual condition, but we do find ourselves on a spiritual journey together where words seem less important than a spirit that gives them meaning. Words, however, are how we communicate our experiences, and those who become Friends need to be able to listen with open minds and hearts to what others are trying to communicate and to encourage them in their efforts. Given this, it is not surprising that Friends have no formal creed.

Only Monthly Meetings (FMC is a "Monthly Meeting", in contrast to other levels of organization: e.g. Quarterly Meetings, Yearly Meetings) are empowered to accept individuals into membership and to record them as members of the RSOF. Membership in FMC entails membership in Salem Quarterly Meeting, NEYM, Friends General Conference, Friends United Meeting, and Friends World Committee for Consultation (p. 235, Faith and Practice of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends (Book of Discipline), Worcester, MA; NEYM, 1985).

Membership in FMC involves a commitment to a community and to a way of life rather than to a creed or dogma. The decision to request membership comes from an inner leading rather than from outward persuasion. In one sense, one does not apply to the Meeting for membership; rather, one becomes aware that one belongs. For those who are interested, we suggest the following:

1. Get to Know the Meeting.

- Participate regularly in Meeting for Worship for perhaps a year or more. In addition, learn more about Quakerism, and become part of the Meeting community. Some ways of doing this are to:
- Attend the monthly business meetings in worship at FMC to learn the decision-making process of Friends.
- Attend forums, retreats, workshops, potluck meals, newcomers' breakfasts, and other events detailed in the monthly Bulletin and weekly announcement sheets.
- Attend and possibly then join one of our committees (after talking with the clerk of the committee). Most committees are open to non-members as well as members. These committees do the work necessary to maintain the Meeting and guide the Meeting's participation in the larger world.
- Explore "Faith and Practice of NEYM", a book of information and guidance about the history and practice of New England Friends in particular, and liberal, "un-programmed" Friends in general. The book of Faith and Practice is periodically updated and revised, reflecting Friends' belief that truth unfolds over time ("continuing revelation"). Explore our social testimonies and consider their relevance to your life.
- Read other books on the history and practice of Friends.
- Take the short course on Quakerism offered by FMC ("Quakerism 101").
- Attend family worship, and after a time consider helping with our First Day (Sunday) School.
- Feel free to bring any questions you might have to anyone on the Membership Committee.

2. Request Membership

To request membership, write a letter or e-mail (office@fmcquaker.org) to the Presiding Clerk, Friends Meeting at Cambridge, 5 Longfellow Park, Cambridge MA 02138. The presiding clerk passes the letter to the meeting secretary, who makes copies for:

- The clerk(s) of the Meeting on Ministry and Counsel,
- The clerk(s) of Membership Committee,
- The presiding clerk, and
- The assistant clerk.

The original letter is kept in the Meeting archives; a copy is kept in the office files and in the Membership Committee clerk's file. The letter may be short or long, and might include background that could help to introduce the prospective member, such as past religious experience, association with Quakers, or ways in which the applicant feels FMC might be his or her spiritual "home." This letter is read at the next meeting of the Membership Committee.

3. Participate in the Clearness Process

- 1) On receiving the letter, the Membership Committee informs the Monthly Meeting. The applicant is encouraged to be present at the next meeting for business to be introduced to the Meeting. Members of the Meeting are expected to share significant information about prospective members with the Membership Committee. Friends acquainted with an applicant should communicate with the Membership Committee as soon as possible after the Monthly Meeting at which the application for membership is announced.
- 2) The Membership Committee asks two or three Friends to visit with the applicant (a "clearness committee"). One of these Friends is designated as the convener. The clearness committee meets with the applicant, preferably in the applicant's home. The applicant is given a copy of Faith and Practice of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends. The method and spirit in which Friends' meetings for worship and for business are conducted are carefully reviewed for the applicant, together with the responsibilities implied by

membership:

- Regular attendance at meetings for worship and business,
 - Service on committees,
 - Willingness to share a just portion of the financial support of the meeting, and
 - Participation in Friends' groups beyond the Monthly Meeting.
- 3) Most Friends in New England today have come to Quakerism from other spiritual traditions. They often bring with them deep spiritual ties to that heritage which they wish to acknowledge while being members of the Religious Society of Friends. When an individual requests membership in the Religious Society of Friends and at the same time wishes to retain membership in another tradition, it is important for their clearness committee to explore with them their reasons and the implications of this. It is essential for the clearness committee to question whether their desire to be in a formal membership relationship with two faith traditions indicates a lack of clarity regarding their spiritual path. In some cases, membership in two faith communities will not work: the commitment needs to be whole-hearted. In other cases, there is more ambiguity, and Friends need to be flexible as well as careful to discern what is at stake. Each such decision should be made taking into account the particular circumstances of each applicant.
 - 4) The clearness committee keeps the Membership Committee informed about its progress. When the clearness committee has reached unity, it makes a recommendation to the Membership Committee, which considers it and, if it is clear that membership should go forward, passes it on to the next meeting for business. If there is not unity to proceed with the request, one or two Friends appointed by the Membership Committee will contact the applicant to convey the Committee's concerns and to collaborate on an appropriate course of action. If the clearness committee and the applicant agree that membership is not appropriate at this time, the process is ended, and the applicant may re-apply later.
 - 5) If brought forward, the meeting for business considers and then acts on the Membership Committee's recommendation. The applicant is encouraged to be present at this meeting. If the application is approved, the Monthly Meeting records the acceptance into membership. The clerk or the assistant clerk of the Meeting writes a letter of welcome to the new member, officially acknowledging the Meeting's action and furnishes the new member with a copy of the approving minute. A recorder's form for statistical information is enclosed with this letter to be filled out and returned to the office.
 - 6) Membership Committee will ask one or more Friends to arrange a welcoming for the new member. A welcoming is often a social event, such as a potluck dinner or a picnic. This is an *opportunity* for those appointed to welcome the new member, along with other family members or friends, to become better acquainted with one another. Friends aim to offer continuing support as the new member begins to take part in the life of the Meeting, including helping to find which committee(s) of the Meeting might benefit from the new member's gifts and interests.

TRANSFER TO FMC FROM ANOTHER FRIENDS MEETING REQUEST FROM THE HOME MEETING

A Friend who is a member in good standing of another Monthly Meeting and would like to transfer membership to FMC writes a letter to his or her home Monthly Meeting requesting a letter of transfer. The letter of transfer (sometimes called a "certificate of removal" or, in NEYM, a "certificate of transfer") is sent to the Presiding Clerk, Friends Meeting at Cambridge, 5 Longfellow Park, Cambridge, MA 02138.

When a certificate of transfer is received by the presiding clerk, the Meeting secretary makes copies, as for new requests (see above). This certificate of transfer is read at the next meeting of the Membership Committee, which then brings the request to the next meeting for business, which accepts the transfer unless there is sufficient reason to the contrary. The transferring Friend is encouraged to be present at this meeting for business. Just as in the process for a new member, the Membership Committee appoints one or more Friends to welcome the transferring member to the Meeting.

The clerk or the assistant clerk of the Meeting writes a letter of welcome to the transferring member, officially acknowledging the Meeting's action, and enclosing a recorder's form for statistical information to be filled out and returned to the Meeting secretary. A letter is also sent to the former Monthly Meeting informing it of the transfer.

SOJOURNING MEMBERSHIP TO FMC

FMC may accept as a sojourning member persons maintaining membership in other Friends' meetings who wish to be associated with FMC while residing temporarily in our area. The Friend requests that the home Meeting send a letter to the Presiding Clerk, Friends Meeting at Cambridge, 5 Longfellow Park, Cambridge, MA 02138; the letter is distributed as per a request for new membership. The letter recommending sojourning membership is read at the next meeting of the Membership Committee. Membership Committee appoints one Friend to contact the Friend who will be sojourning at FMC in order to become acquainted with the sojourning Friend and to acknowledge that the Membership Committee has received the letter of recommendation. Membership Committee usually recommends that the next meeting for business accept the sojourning membership.

The sojourning Friend is encouraged to be present at this meeting for business. The clerk or the assistant clerk of the Meeting writes a letter of welcome to the sojourning member, officially acknowledging the Monthly Meeting's action. The clerk or assistant clerk also writes to the home Monthly Meeting confirming the acceptance of the sojourner. Just as in the process for a new member, the Membership Committee recommends the appointment of one or more Friends to welcome the sojourning member into the Meeting.

We hope that a sojourning member will share fully in all aspects of our meeting's activities, including attending meeting for worship, meeting for business, service on our committees, and supporting FMC financially. Sojourning membership is not counted in statistical reports and ceases when FMC informs the home meeting that the sojourner has left the FMC area or has become inactive.

JUNIOR MEMBERSHIP AT FRIENDS MEETING AT CAMBRIDGE

1. Membership by Parental Request

The Monthly Meeting records minor children as junior members upon receipt of:

- Written request of both parents if they are members of the meeting,
- Written request of a member parent and consent of a non-member parent, or of the member parent in single parent households,
- Written request of a guardian who is a member, and
- Under other appropriate circumstances upon recommendation of Membership Committee.

Junior members so recorded are counted in FMC's statistical reports.

Enrolling children as junior members in this way is an expression of the conviction that children and young people have a special interest in and claim upon the Meeting. The FMC community should earnestly foster the child's spiritual well-being and growth. Junior members should be encouraged to attend both meeting for worship and meeting for business and if it can be

arranged, to work as members of meeting committees.

Friends Meeting at Cambridge records junior members according to the procedures outlined in Faith and Practice.

2. Request by a Junior Member for Adult Membership

At any time, a junior member can affirm in writing that she or he wishes to apply for permanent membership in FMC. Two Friends are appointed by the Membership Committee, just as in the case of a new application, as a committee for clearness to meet with that junior member. [See the section on NEW REQUESTS above.]

3. Maintaining Contact with Junior Members

At age 18, the Membership Committee writes junior members. The purpose is to keep in touch with these members as well as to inform them of the process for affirmation or termination of their membership. Junior members will be *informed* that at any time before age 25 they can request in writing that they may apply for adult membership. A designated Friend from the Membership Committee will keep in touch with each of these junior members, but the junior member has the responsibility to keep the committee informed about progress towards a decision. A copy of this letter is sent to the parents.

Junior Members About to Turn 25

For those Junior Members who are, or will be twenty-five years old during a given calendar year, another outreach letter is sent, including a paragraph that states that if they have not affirmed the continuation of their membership by a specified date, the Membership Committee will notify the Monthly Meeting that their names should be removed from the membership list.

- **Communications to Monthly Meeting for Business**

The Membership Committee may forward one of the following recommendations or notifications regarding junior membership to the Monthly Meeting:

- **Continuation of Membership:**

1. If the Membership Committee finds clearness (through a process similar to that of a new request) in a junior member's request to affirm their adult membership.

- **Termination of Membership:**

1. If the junior member wishes to terminate her or his membership, no further action by the Monthly Meeting is required.
2. If no reply is received by age twenty-six, no further action by the Monthly Meeting is required.

- **Action by Monthly Meeting**

- The Clerk or Assistant Clerk of the Meeting writes to each of these junior members informing them of the action of the Monthly Meeting.

-

PROCEDURES FOR FRIENDS LEAVING OR NO LONGER RESIDENT AT FMC

The Membership Committee keeps in touch with members living at a distance, including those sojourning in another meeting. At least every four (maybe five?) years a personal letter should be sent by the Membership Committee to non-resident members inquiring whether the Friend wishes to continue his or her membership in FMC when appropriate. Friends are reminded to consider

transferring membership to a close-by meeting, or, if their absence is temporary, of becoming a sojourning member in such a meeting. In either case, they should request a minute from this meeting be sent to the Monthly Meeting with which they wish to be associated. If no information has been or can be received from a member for a period of five years or more, the Monthly Meeting may, at its discretion, remove the name from the list of members.

TRANSFER OF MEMBERS OF FMC TO ANOTHER FRIENDS MEETING

If a member of FMC feels clear to transfer membership to another Monthly Meeting, the member writes a letter to the Presiding Clerk, Friends Meeting at Cambridge, 5 Longfellow Park, Cambridge, MA 02138 requesting that membership be transferred to that Monthly Meeting. The letter needs to include the name and address of the Monthly Meeting and the person or committee to whom the certificate of transfer should be directed. Upon receiving a letter of request for transfer from a member of FMC, the Meeting Secretary makes copies of the letter, as for requests for new membership. Membership Committee will then determine the Friend's clearness for transfer. If there are circumstances in the transferring member's life or personality that the other Monthly Meeting should be made aware of (e.g. we have not seen them for years), Membership Committee will contact the clerk of that Meeting. Otherwise, if the transfer seems appropriate, the Committee reports its approval to the Monthly Meeting requests that the Monthly Meeting approve the transfer, and the Clerk or Assistant Clerk sends a letter of transfer to the other Monthly Meeting. This letter includes the name, address, and telephone number of the transferring member, with a request that the new Meeting inform us of acceptance of the transfer. A copy is sent to the transferring member. Only when FMC receives word that the transfer has been accepted should the member's name be removed from FMC's membership roster.

SOJOURNING MEMBERSHIP IN ANOTHER MONTHLY MEETING

A member in good standing of FMC who is or will be temporarily living away from the Cambridge area, but near another Monthly Meeting, may obtain sojourning membership in that other Monthly Meeting by writing to the Presiding Clerk, Friends Meeting at Cambridge, 5 Longfellow Park, Cambridge, MA 02138 requesting a letter recommending them for sojourning membership. The letter is distributed as per a request for new membership. The Membership Committee announces the request at the next Monthly Meeting. The Clerk or Assistant Clerk then writes to the other Monthly Meeting recommending the sojourning membership; a copy is sent to the Sojourner. The sojourning member to the other Monthly Meeting remains on our telephone and address list.

JOINING OTHER RELIGIOUS GROUPS

If a member in good standing wishes to become a member of some other religious group, the Monthly Meeting may grant a letter of recommendation. Upon request for such a letter of recommendation, the Membership Committee appoints a clearness committee to discuss the member's plans and situation with the member and discern whether dual membership is sought and/or appropriate. The clearness committee will bring forward a recommendation to the Committee. The Committee will present its recommendation for action at the next Monthly Meeting.

RESIGNATIONS

A member of FMC who would like to resign membership should write a letter to the Presiding Clerk, Friends Meeting at Cambridge, 5 Longfellow Park, Cambridge, MA 02138 requesting the termination of the membership. Membership Committee should consider asking one or two Friends to visit or correspond in a tender spirit and inquire into the cause of the action. If the Friend's wish is unchanged, receipt of the letter of resignation is reported by the Membership Committee at the next Monthly Meeting. A minute will be drafted granting the Friend's request for release, and the Friend shall be furnished a copy of this minute by the Clerk or Assistant Clerk.

DISCONTINUANCE

When any member habitually neglects attendance at meeting, fails to contribute to its support, or in other ways evidences a lack of unity with Friends, membership committee should alert the Meeting on Ministry and Counsel. When it considers that a member's conduct is contrary to the ideals and practices of Friends, the Meeting on Ministry and Counsel shall bring the matter to the attention of the Monthly Meeting. The Monthly Meeting shall appoint a committee to confer with the Friend in question. If the committee considers that the Friend is in error, it should endeavor in a spirit of love and tenderness to engender that state of mind and heart that will enable renewed fellowship with the meeting. If the exercise of due care and forbearance appears to be of no avail, the Meeting may choose to remove the Friend's name from its list of members and should so inform the person concerned.

A Friend whose membership has been discontinued by the Monthly Meeting may, if dissatisfied with the decision, file an appeal with the Salem Quarterly Meeting. If either the Friend whose membership is in question or the Monthly Meeting concerned is dissatisfied with the decision of the quarterly meeting, an appeal may be addressed to the Permanent Board of the Yearly Meeting. The decision of the Permanent Board shall be final.

MEMBERSHIP RECORDS

An accurate list of members should be appended to the Monthly Meeting minutes every ten years, beginning with the first Monthly Meeting in 1985.

MARRIAGE

PROCEDURES FOR MARRIAGE UNDER THE CARE OF THE MEETING

LETTER OF INTENTIONS

When a couple have decided that they wish to be married under the care of the Meeting, they should notify the Meeting by writing a letter addressed to the Clerk, with a copy to the Clerk of Marriage, Family, and Relationships. A sample letter of intentions is included in New England Yearly Meeting's Faith and Practice.

When either member of the couple is a member of another Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, that Meeting should send a letter to Friends Meeting at Cambridge, requesting that the marriage be taken under its care.

Clearness Committee

When the Marriage, Family, and Relationships Committee receives a copy of the letter, it will recommend a clearness committee, usually composed of two men and two women Friends, to meet with the couple and explore with them the appropriateness of marriage under the care of the Meeting. The Monthly Meeting must approve the clearness committee for Business. If the couple is not well known to the Meeting or to the Committee, a member of the Marriage, Family, and Relationships Committee may meet with them first for a preliminary discussion.

When the clearness committee has been approved by the Monthly Meeting, it will meet with the couple one or more times. Following are some questions that the committee and the couple may

explore together (adapted in part from Pacific Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice):

Background and acquaintance: How well does the couple know one another? Do they share common values? Does either partner have physical/medical problems of which the other should be aware?

Religious beliefs, values and aspirations: Do they see marriage as a sacred relationship to be entered into with appreciation of its spiritual basis? How do they plan to conduct their spiritual life as a couple? How do they plan to make their marriage accessible to Divine assistance? Do they endeavor to speak to that of God in each other?

Life together: Do they see themselves as trusted and equal partners, sharing responsibilities and decisions? Do they support one another's goals? How do they discuss and seek to resolve differences? Do they communicate their feelings and needs to each other? Have they considered together whether they desire children? How do they handle money and possessions?

Prior Commitments: Are they legally free to marry? Have they prior obligations, personal or financial, which need to be met? Are there unresolved previous relationships?

Attitude of Families: How do their families feel about the proposed marriage? Is each partner prepared to "marry into" the other partner's family?

A detailed set of queries for those contemplating marriage is contained in the book *Living with Oneself and Others: Working Papers on Aspects of Family Life*, published by New England Yearly Meeting. Couples and clearness committees may find these queries useful in their meetings. The sections on marriage in New England Yearly Meeting's Faith and Practice are also recommended to couples and clearness committees.

Couples should be aware that the search for clearness is an open-ended process, and may require several meetings. In some cases, unity as to the couple's clearness may not emerge, and the request for marriage may be laid aside temporarily or permanently. When the clearness committee is ready to recommend that the couple be married under the care of the Meeting, it reports this to the Marriage, Family, and Relationships Committee. That Committee then considers this recommendation and then, in turn, reports its endorsement to the Monthly Meeting, which will normally allow the couple's marriage.

The clearness process is confidential. The clearness committee reports to the Monthly Meeting simply that it does, or does not find the couple clear for marriage.

Occasionally a couple may be found clear by another Monthly Meeting. That meeting should write a letter to the Clerk of Friends Meeting at Cambridge, certifying that the couple has been found clear for marriage.

COMMITTEE FOR CARE OF THE WEDDING

When the Monthly Meeting has allowed the marriage, the couple should set a date and time for the wedding and, with the help of the Marriage, Family, and Relationships Committee, select a committee suggested to be composed of at least two men and two women Friends, which may alter in case of same-sex couples. This committee is responsible for helping the couple to plan their wedding, and for seeing that the wedding itself is conducted in good order. Since many practical details are involved in planning the wedding, at least one member should have served on a previous Committee for Care of the Wedding. The committee must be approved, and a Meeting for Worship appointed, by the Monthly Meeting for Business. Often the committee members are approved and the wedding appointed at the same Monthly Meeting at which the clearness committee's recommendation is accepted.

Before 2004, same sex couples did not enjoy the same privileges and protection under the law as did heterosexual couples, Cambridge Friends Meeting has established a set of prenuptial agreements that will give to same sex couples rights and responsibilities equivalent to those of spouses legally married under Massachusetts law. The Committee for Care of the Wedding for these couples is responsible for seeing that the prenuptial agreements have been legally accomplished and that a letter from their lawyer stating this is on file at the Meeting office.

A NOTE ON TIMING

Couples should note that the process described here, from the initial application to the wedding, can take several months, and should make their wedding plans accordingly, ideally giving the Meeting more than 5 months' notice. At least two Monthly Meetings are needed to meet procedural requirements, and the clearness process may take longer than one month.

Getting prenuptial agreements drawn up may also be time-consuming. Couples should not fix a date for the wedding or send announcements until they have been found clear and a date has been approved by the Monthly Meeting. Couples may ask to have a tentative 'wedding reservation' penciled on the calendar so that the Meeting House will not get booked for another purpose during the clearness process.

ADVICES ON WEDDING PROCEDURE

A wedding is a Meeting for Worship on the occasion of marriage. Every effort should be made to ensure that the spirit of worship prevails throughout.

The guests gather in silence. The couple enters together and takes their seats. When the guests have gathered and the couple is seated, it is good to have one member of the Committee for Care of the Wedding stand, welcome guests, and briefly explain what will happen during the wedding. Guests who have never attended a Quaker wedding may be confused and uncomfortable if they are not prepared for the silence. The introduction will also indicate to guests that the ceremony has begun.

After a period of silent worship, the couple rise together and, taking one another by the hand, make their promises in words to this effect:

In the presence of God and these Friends, I take thee, to be my (husband, wife, partner), promising, with divine assistance, to be unto thee a loving and faithful (wife, husband, partner) as long as we both shall live.

If rings are used, they are exchanged immediately after the promises. The couple then takes their seats.

As soon as the couple is seated, the marriage certificate is placed before them for their signatures. (This is a good opportunity to involve family members in the wedding). When the couple has signed the certificate, the table on which it is laid is returned to its place, and a guest or member of the Committee for Care of the Wedding reads the certificate aloud. (This is another opportunity to involve family members.)

A longer period of silent worship begins, during which guests give spoken messages if they feel so led. This period should be long enough that a gathered spirit prevails and it seems clear that all who might do so have spoken.

The meeting can be closed in several ways. The couple may stand and leave the room, after which the members of the Committee for Care of the Wedding break meeting. This gives the couple a chance to place themselves to greet guests as they leave. The couple themselves may wish to break meeting, or to remain while the committee members do so. At the rise of meeting, a committee

member should remind all guests to sign the marriage certificate.

A FEW COMMENTS

Calligraphers: Most couples choose to have a hand-lettered marriage certificate prepared. The Marriage, Family, and Relationships Committee can recommend calligraphers. Printed certificates are also available from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. The traditional wording of the certificate is given in New England Yearly Meeting's Faith and Practice. The certificate should be signed in permanent ink.

It is advisable to have a rehearsal before the wedding. While a Friends' wedding involves less ceremony than the usual wedding, the participants are more responsible for what ceremony there is, and everyone will be more comfortable if they have rehearsed. The person who will be reading the certificate should practice doing so before the wedding.

To preserve the wedding's character as a Meeting for Worship, no photographs should be taken during the meeting.

If many guests are unfamiliar with Friends, the couple may wish to include a brief description of a Quaker wedding in their invitations. The Marriage & Family Life Committee can provide sample copies of a leaflet entitled "A Quaker Marriage", available from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Some couples choose to prepare their own statement.

The City of Cambridge, Dept. of Traffic and Parking, (617-349-4700), 57 Inman Street, Cambridge, MA 02139, should be notified in writing, two days in advance of the wedding, and told how many guests are expected. If there will be many guests, someone should be appointed to watch over traffic, being especially sure that no one parks on the grass of Longfellow Park.

Couples and Oversight Committees should be aware of the need for security for gifts and other valuables in the Meeting House lobby and Friends Center.

The Friends Center adjacent to the Meeting House may be used for receptions. Alcohol is not served at the Center. Food and drink are not allowed in the Meeting House. People may smoke outside, but not in any of the buildings. Arrangements must be made to put the Meeting House and Center in good order after the wedding and/or reception.

LEGAL AND ARCHIVAL MATTERS

It is easy to confuse the terms marriage license and *marriage certificate*. The *marriage license* is a legal document issued by a city to register a marriage. The *marriage certificate* is the traditional Quaker document recording the accomplishment of a marriage in the manner of Friends. It is kept by the couple, and a copy is kept by the meeting. It has no legal status.

The couple is responsible for obtaining a marriage license. The Marriage, Family, and Relationships Committee can provide information and literature on how to do so. After the wedding, the couple should see that the marriage license reaches the Clerk of the Meeting promptly. The Clerk will sign it and return it to the city in which it was issued.

The Meeting keeps copies of all certificates of marriages under its care. The certificate should be photographically reduced to 8.5" by 11" on acid-free paper, and a typed list of the signers should be prepared. Overseers are responsible for seeing that these documents are delivered to the Meeting.

ONGOING CARE OF THE MARRIAGE

The Marriage, Family, and Relationships Committee encourages a reunion meeting of the couple with their Clearness and Care of the Wedding committees about one year after their wedding. This provides an

opportunity to explore together how the marriage is prospering and whether the Committee can be of any further help.

The couple should feel free to contact the Marriage, Family, and Relationships Committee at any time that they feel that it can help them. All Friends, at all times, are responsible for the nurture of the committed relationships among us.

CHECKLIST FOR WEDDING DETAILS

ONE WEEK BEFORE THE CEREMONY

- Write to the City of Cambridge, Department of Traffic and Parking (617-349-4700) 57 Inman St., Cambridge, MA 02139 to ask for “consideration” for parking near the Meeting House one hour before to one hour following the Wedding/Reception.

ONE DAY BEFORE THE CEREMONY—AT THE LATEST

- Rehearsal at place of ceremony. All present, including the Committee on Care of the Wedding.
- Completed certificate, pen and ink present.
- If the Wedding is a legal ceremony, have the license present, to be delivered to Committee on Care of the Wedding or the Office Secretary.
- Plan seating of the couple and their families.
- Plan procedure. Opening remarks explaining the Friends’ marriage ceremony may be used, if desired.
- Walk through the complete procedure, including reading the certificate aloud.
- Plan signing of certificate. Usually, a member of the family, or of the Committee on Care of the Wedding, makes sure that everyone present at the Wedding signs the certificate. Sometimes specific spaces on the certificate are reserved for the signatures of the wedding party, family, and overseers.
- Be aware that in the winter the Meeting House takes approximately four hours to warm up from below freezing. This detail is usually taken care of by the Center staff.

DAY OF THE CEREMONY

- Any floral decorations? Complete these at least one hour before the ceremony.
- Dressing Rooms? Either the Selleck Room, the Children’s Library on the second floor of the Friends Center, or the Guest Room (if available) on the third floor.
- Wedding gifts brought to ceremony? Put these in either the Selleck Room or the Children’s Library on the second floor of the Friends Center.
- Rest Rooms? In the Friends Center.
- Photography? There should be no photography in the Meeting House from the time that guests begin to enter until the assembly has dispersed. Arrangements for photography should be discussed with the Committee on Care of the Wedding. Pictures of the Meeting for Worship are discouraged because it would disturb the worshipful quality of the occasion.
- Small Children? Arrangements for Childcare in the Friends Center.
- Couples and Committees on Care should be aware of the need for security for gifts and

- other valuables in the Meeting House lobby and Friends Center.
- Alcohol is not to be served at the Friends Center. Food and drink are not allowed in the Meeting House. Smoke outside.

AFTER THE CEREMONY AND/OR RECEPTION

- Committee on Care of the Wedding or couple retrieve certificate for copying (reduced on acid free paper to 8 1/2 by 11 inch) into Meeting records. A typed list of the signatures is an invaluable aid.
- If a legal ceremony, the Committee on Care of the Wedding gives the license to the Office Secretary for signing by the Clerk of the Monthly Meeting
- Make extra copies for records and the Cambridge City Clerk
- File the original with the City Clerk.
- The Committee for Care of the Wedding reports to the next Monthly Meeting.

GUIDELINES FOR USE OF THE MEETING HOUSE FOR MARRIAGES NOT UNDER THE CARE OF THE MEETING

The Meeting House is used for occasions compatible with the spirit of Friends. In the case of couples seeking use of the Meeting House for a wedding not under the care of the Meeting, it is most important that their approach to their marriage be in harmony with that of Friends. This is especially true when neither the partners nor members of their immediate families are members or long-time attenders of a Quaker Meeting.

In addition, the couple or members of their immediate families must know a member of the Friends Meeting at Cambridge who is sufficiently interested in the marriage of the couple that she or he would be willing to oversee the use of the property during both the rehearsal and the wedding.

Since the marriage is not performed under the care of Friends Meeting at Cambridge, if the couple so desires, they must take responsibility for finding the appropriate person to legally perform the service.

Because the property must remain open for functions of the Meeting, such a wedding should not be booked more than three months prior to the occasion.

A contribution in the range of \$250-\$400 is suggested for the use of the Meeting House for a wedding not under the care of the Meeting. A contribution in the range of \$200-\$300 is suggested for the use of the Friends Room. For a wedding, reception, and the use of two guest rooms, \$615 is suggested.

Alcohol is not to be used on the premises, and tobacco is not to be used in the buildings.

If the fireplace is to be used, the liaison person is responsible for its correct use. Firewood is not provided by the Meeting.

MEMORIAL MEETINGS

The Memorial Meetings Committee, with the assistance of the Facilities Manager and the Meeting community, oversees memorial meetings. Although each memorial is unique, all are held in "reverent simplicity" in the manner of Friends.

CHECK LIST FOR CLERK

The following is a checklist for the Memorials Meetings Committee clerk:

- Determine which family member, partner or friend of the deceased will be arranging for the memorial.
- Explain to that family member, partner or friend that the scheduling of memorial meetings and parking arrangements for that day are made by FMC's Facilities Manager.
- Once a date has been confirmed by the Facilities Manager, notify members of the Memorials Committee and the clerk of the Meeting on Ministry and Counsel.
- Questions to be raised with the designated family member, partner or friend by the Memorials Committee's clerk:
- What are that person's hopes and wishes for the memorial?
- Every memorial is different; every memorial is special. Listen attentively when the designated person describes an ideal memorial.
- Who will have care of meeting?
The designated family member, partner or friend may have already asked someone. The clerk may be asked to suggest names. For family members, partners or clerks unfamiliar with Quaker practice, the clerk should explain that in the case of a memorial meeting, when many in attendance have never attended a memorial meeting before, the person who has care of meeting rises at the beginning of the meeting to welcome everyone and to give a brief explanation of a Quaker memorial.
- How many people are expected? (Although it is often difficult to gauge.) For a large gathering, the reception is held in the Friends Room; the library may be used for a smaller group.
- Is an exceptionally large crowd expected?

CHECK LIST FOR FACILITIES MANAGER

The Facilities Manager can arrange additional seating arrangements in the meetinghouse and in the Friends Center.

- What sorts of food and beverages would they prefer for the reception? Do they have a color preference for the paper goods?
- Were they planning to include special music during the worship? If so, have they discussed the necessary arrangements with the Facilities Manager?
- Were they planning to provide a guest book to record those attending?
- Were they planning to provide flowers? Family members, partners and friends are encouraged to consider potted flowers that can be subsequently planted in FMC's garden. If asked and when possible, the FMC community generously contributes flowers from individuals' gardens, as well.
- Were they planning to distribute a leaflet or handout? These leaflets often include a picture of the deceased, a brief biography, and a description of a Quaker memorial. Although such leaflets are the purview of the family member, partner or friend, the Memorial Meeting clerk may be asked to provide samples. (Such samples may be found in the clerk's files.)
- Will childcare be needed? Because a memorial meeting is a Meeting function, it will provide childcare in accordance with FMC childcare policy. Determine who is to arrange for childcare.
- Will a photograph or photographic collage or electronic slide show be on display in the Friends Room during the reception? Easels and display tables are available in the Friends Room. The designated person may wish to contact Exhibits Committee to determine if special wall space might be arranged.
- Should a catering service be used, the clerk should recommend that contact numbers be shared with the Committee in case Harvard Square traffic proves difficult. Arrangements for the catering vehicles should also be made.

- Does the designated person wish to meet at the Meetinghouse sometime before the memorial or would that person prefer to arrive early that day?

ADVANCE ARRANGEMENTS

Arrangements to be made with the designated person at Friends Meeting sometime before or on the day of the memorial:

- Where are family members or other special guests to sit? Ribbons designating reserved seats may be found in the large, wooden cabinet in the Meetinghouse foyer.
- Where are flowers to be placed?
- Where are musicians to sit?
- Where in the Friends Room should any special displays be placed?
- Where should the guest book be located?
- Should elderly or disabled people be expected, discuss seating arrangements in the Friends Center. What other accommodations should be made?

CLERK'S INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS

- Solicit requested food and, if appropriate, flowers from the FMC community.
- Ask individual members of the Committee to serve as ushers, have care of door, or to pass out handouts if needed.
- Request that Committee members arrive at least an hour ahead of time.
- Committee's supplies of teas, sugar, paper goods, stored in a large plastic container kept in the kitchen closet.
- Purchase needed paper goods and perishables (half-and-half, lemons, ice, etc.). (Receipts for these items should be submitted to the Meeting Secretary for reimbursement.)

ARRANGEMENTS ON THE DAY OF THE MEMORIAL

Per instructions, arrange tables, tablecloths, chairs, easels, platters of food, flowers, etc. in the Friends Room. (Often, the designated person prefers to place the flowers in the Meetinghouse.)

- Unless the designated person had decided otherwise, three tables are usually placed end to end on the center of the room and a table for beverages is placed against the wall closest to the kitchen. A table on the opposite wall is sometimes used for additional food or is sometimes used for the photographic display.
- If requested, make coffee, place urns for coffee and hot water on beverage table.
- Just before the memorial begins, place the "Silent worship" sandwich board sign in the driveway outside the Meetinghouse.
- Clean up after the guests have left. Arrangements must be made for any leftover food. These arrangements could include labeling and freezing items for an upcoming memorial, making arrangements for the person in charge of the Sunday coffee hour to use, or donating leftovers to an area homeless shelter.

CLEARNESS AND SUPPORT COMMITTEES

CARE COMMITTEES

(Source New England Yearly Meeting Ministry and Counsel website <https://neym.org/ministry-counsel/care-committees>)

Many Friends lead rich and faithful spiritual lives without ever facing a leading or ministry. They can serve as patterns and examples to us simply by living faithfully. If, however, you find yourself led you should look to your meeting for help. As you discover and carry out the leading or ministry that is given to you, you may ask your meeting for the spiritual support of short term or continuing committees. Your meeting has a critical role to play in bringing its human and spiritual resources to bear on behalf of your leading or ministry.

- **Exploring a leading/ministry:** you may pull together a group to help you if you are feeling a spiritual pull without yet discerning a clear sense of what that means. Some meetings set up small groups for spiritual friendship, mutual spiritual nurture or spiritual exploration. If you are new to your meeting or do not have a sense of what its practice is, ask members of the Ministry and Counsel/Worship committee.
- **Testing a leading** or ministry: Clearness Committees hold a prayerful space and actively listen as a way to encourage a Friend into an understanding of way forward--how to proceed consistent with the guidance of the Light. Many Meetings see the work of Clearness Committees to consist in answering a clearly defined question or testing a specific leading. Some Meetings offer such committees for more general explorations.
- **Spiritual Care, Oversight, Anchor or Accountability Committees** support the ministries or leadings of individual Friends. A Meeting or its Ministry and Counsel Committee (often at the recommendation of a Clearness Committee) should name the ministry/leading and set up the committee for the individual.
- While some Meetings may call the committee that watches over a ministry or leading a **Support Committee**, the term Support Committee usually indicates a group that walks with a Friend as he or she negotiates a major life transition, loss, inward or outward crisis. Often these are under the committee that offers pastoral care in your meeting.

The [School of the Spirit](#) offers a very helpful booklet: *The Spiritual Care Committee* for purchase or download.

MINUTE ON CLEARNESS COMMITTEES (1977)

(The original minute from Ministry and Counsel, Oversight and Fellowship, and Marriage Committees, dated April 17, 1977, named what we now call committees for clearness, Meetings for Worship, Searching, and Support)

The spiritual strength of a Meeting finds important expression through the loving community of its members. Out of awareness and responsiveness of its members to each other, grow the bonds of trust and love that allow the Meeting to find coherence in its spiritual life and unity in its actions.

It is appropriate to the development of this spiritual life that members of the Meeting should feel free to approach the Meeting for assistance in dealing with major turning points in life, including such matters as career decisions, lack of funds to live on, terminal illness, withholding of taxes, marriage or separation and divorce. Our response might be generally to help bring these members into the Light through a specially called Meeting for Worship, Sharing, and Support (*Clearness Committee*), understood as “ where two or three are gathered in my name...” The purpose would be to help individuals find that guidance from God in which we all seek to live and move and have our being.

A secondary response might be to suggest individuals either in the Meeting or outside who might provide knowledgeable counsel in the spirit of worship. Friends should not have to undergo an unwanted sense of isolation while considering acts of conscience, illness, stressful relationships, and the like.

Anyone desiring such assistance should contact the Clerk of the Meeting, a member of a relevant committee, or any Friend who will send on the request. The Meeting on Ministry and Counsel, the committees on Marriage, Family, and Relationships, Fellowship and Outreach, Committees, the Trustees of the Ebenezer Pope Fund (for those in financial need), upon receiving such request would appoint two or more Friends to consult with the individual about next steps. These Friends need not be members of the committee, and could be suggested by the individual in need. The responsibility of the Friends so appointed would normally be to arrange for a Meeting for Worship. It is not intended that these specially arranged Meetings for Worship should be appointed by the Monthly Meeting and open to everyone. They are designed to help a particular individual gain clarity and strength by serving as a channel for Divine Guidance. Such special Meetings would also be called to give thanks in times of celebration. We rejoice that, in ministering to each other, we are called out of our solitude towards experience of the wholeness that merges in the Light.

PROCEDURES FOR SETTING UP CARE COMMITTEES

Note: Clearness for membership is under the care of the Membership Committee; clearness for marriage is under care of Marriage, Family, and Relationships Committee. These are specific processes. The more general procedures outlined here are not meant to cover them.

Issues involving conflicts within the Meeting may need to be referred to Salem Quarter or New England Yearly Meeting Ministry and Counsel since it may be difficult for those within the Friends Meeting at Cambridge (FMC) community to stay neutral and unattached enough to support the member(s) in distress

When a request for a care committee comes... NOTE: The person making a request is vulnerable. Be sure to communicate with them weekly or as needed so they supported while waiting. TIP: Do not assume email or voice mail is received. The handoff is not complete until there is direct communication.	Anyone within the Meeting who receives a request for a care committee should take responsibility for staying in contact with the requester until the request is taken on by one of the Committees that set up care committees. Those are: • Committee for Care and Support (C&S) • Marriage, Family, and Relationships Committee (MF&R) • Meeting on Ministry and Counsel (M&C) • Membership Committee (MBR) Anyone within the Meeting who receives a request for a care committee should contact the clerk of one of these bodies who may pass on the request to someone within that body. See further information below for which body to contact. Once voice contact is made (or email confirmation is received) with a clerk or representative, then whomever the requester first contacted hands over the responsibility to that representative. Ideally, the original person contacted will report to the requester, telling them who has taken on the request.
Which committee?	These are rough guidelines for which body to contact: MF&R: Marriage, parenting, relationships within a family, separation, divorce, decisions about sharing parenting responsibilities after separation or divorce, difficulties with sharing a meeting with a former spouse, adoption. C&S: Illness, grieving, loss, careers, care giving, end-of-life issues, life crises. MBR: Persons interested in joining the meeting, transferring membership to or from another Friends meeting, or with other concerns such as the meaning or responsibilities of membership. M&C: Spiritual leadings, spiritual distress, conflicts with the Meeting community. If you are uncertain about the appropriate committee, feel free to discuss it with the clerk(s) of any likely sounding choice. Clerks may assess current workloads when determining which body will have responsibility for the clearness committee
Then what?	The committee clerk/contact person will: • Respond directly to the original receiver of the request, making sure the communication is received. (Do not assume emails or voice mails are received. Get a response to know you have made contact.) • Contact the requester to let him or her know you got the request, to learn more, and to give a time frame in which to expect a committee. Assure the requester of confidentiality in the process.

What information to gather from the requester	• How familiar is the requester with care committees? Determine whether a clearness or a support committee is needed. Also, is the need within our ability? A referral to a professional may be called for instead of, or in addition to, a care committee. (You can take information and consult with others to determine this.) • Nature of care needed. Ask the person what will be helpful: often what they are looking for may be different from what we expect. • Urgency of the request. • Names of people the requester would like to have serve on the committee, or not serve, (though let the requester know that his or her suggested individuals may not be able to serve.)
Form the care committee	The representative setting up the care committee selects and contacts Friends to serve on the clearness committee (usually three to five members or attenders) and identifies a convener. The representative also supplies the convener with a copy of the Care Committee Guidelines. • The convener contacts the requester and the clearness committee members to identify a time and place for the first meeting. • The convener distributes Care Committee Guidelines to the requester and members of the care committee. (Available from M&C, MF&R, MBR or C&S clerks.)

GUIDELINES FOR CLEARNESS COMMITTEES

1. Remember that the goal is to pray with and “draw out the Inner Teacher” for the person seeking help in discernment. A clearness committee is fundamentally a worshipping group seeking guidance.
2. **Confidentiality** should be agreed to in the first meeting. Trust demands that what is said in the room stays in the room unless express permission is granted otherwise. There are a few exceptions: when a committee is unable to function effectively, members may need to consult with the clerk of the Meeting body that appointed the clearness committee for example, revealing as little confidential information as possible. Also, clearness committees cannot be expected to grapple alone with extremely challenging issues such as significant danger to the requester or others. In such cases, members of the committee should also consult with the clerk of the appointing committee. In cases where members feel a need to consult, it is best to do this with the requester’s knowledge and consent if possible.
3. Set the **number of times** the committee should meet. A clearness committee is typically expected to meet one to at most three times. If the committee feels a need to meet for a longer period or to shift its focus from discernment toward ongoing support, it should lay down its clearness role and ask to be reconstituted as a support committee.

4. Is **referral** needed? Some clearness committee requests might be referred to the Quarterly or Yearly Meeting if the issue involves conflicts within the monthly meeting that make it difficult for the monthly meeting to be helpful.
5. If the **requester has any questions or concerns** about the committee, he or she is encouraged to contact the clerk of the appointing body, or one of the clerks of Marriage and Family Life, Care and Support, or Ministry and Counsel.
6. Likewise, if **members of the clearness committee have questions or concerns**, they should ask the requester's permission to contact the clerk of the appointing body, or of Marriage and Family Life, Care and Support, or Ministry and Counsel. Trust within a committee evolves from protecting confidentiality, being mindful of vulnerability, and tending the relationships within the group. Note that unlike support committees, when a *clearness* committee is created with the expectation of reporting to the originating committee, such as in the case of membership or marriage, the requester agrees to this beforehand.
7. For those serving on a clearness committee, please remember that the **goal** of the committee is **prayerful accompaniment in discernment**. You are asked to:
 - Remember that the primary goal is to provide *spiritual* presence.
 - Provide a non-judgmental presence.
 - Listen fully without thinking about what you might say while another is speaking. Consider whether something you are about to say is helpful to the requester. Is it about him or her, not you?
 - Avoid trying to fix the situation. Try to "listen the person into the divine truth" inherent within him or her. If you are moved to offer a suggestion, it is helpful to first ask the requester whether they would like suggestions.
 - Remember that the requester may well choose a different approach than you would, but that requester's authentic self is whole and precious. He or she must find how the Spirit leads him or her, which may not be how the Spirit would lead you.
8. Clearness Committee Meeting Guidelines
 - Meet for no more than 2 hours.
 - Start and end with worship.
 - Be prompt and end promptly.
 - Be sure there is a clear facilitator each time, and that dates and times for meeting are communicated clearly.
 - Avoid communicating in sub-groups about the committee discussions outside the meeting times. Be vigilant to maintain confidentiality.
 - Evaluate the committee's effectiveness at regular intervals.
 - It may be helpful to assign a group member to summarize at the beginning of a meeting what occurred at the previous meeting and the questions or directions that emerged for possible future exploration.
 - Holding the requester in the Light and praying for each other outside the meeting times are always encouraged!
9. When the clearness committee's task is finished, the convener should notify the appointing body that it has been laid down. (See also Parker Palmer "Guidelines for facilitating Clearness Committees at retreats")

www.couragerenewal.org/clearnesscommittee

CARE COMMITTEE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is a Clearness Committee?

A clearness committee is a gathering of Friends who meet to pray with a community member who is seeking divine guidance about a decision, testing a leading toward a particular course of action, or seeking resolution for a conflict. The committee is gathered to focus on a particular question, and meets in the hope of an answer. A clearness committee is not a substitute for professional services such as mediation. It traditionally consists of 3-5 Friends and comes together for one to three meetings, at times arranged by the group in its first meeting.

2. How do I get one?

Speak to the Friend in Residence, the Presiding Clerk of the Meeting, the First Day School Coordinator, or a clerk of one of the following three bodies: Marriage, Family, and Relationships, Care and Support, or the Meeting on Ministry and Counsel (clerks are listed in the Meeting directory). Others in the community can help you make your request if you wish by identifying or contacting the right person.

3. Is a clearness committee appropriate?

If you are not sure whether a clearness committee would be appropriate for your situation, feel free to discuss it with any of the people named above.

4. Who serves on my clearness committee?

You can suggest the names of people you would like to serve on your committee, but not all may be available. The person setting up the committee might suggest others.

5. How are clearness committees different from support committees?

A clearness committee is set up to help a Friend discern, through worshipful presence, whether a particular course of action reflects the movement of the Spirit. It is a way the community can help an individual discern God's will for him or her. "We are reminded that each of us has an Inner Teacher who can guide us, and therefore that answers sought are within the person seeking guidance. A group of caring Friends can serve as a channel of divine guidance in drawing out that Inner Teacher.

Typical situations for the use of clearness committees are marriage, membership in the meeting, whether to divorce, testing a leading to perform a particular ministry, or making end-of-life decisions. Clearness committees generally meet once or twice, but seldom more than three times.

Support committees are formed to support someone for a longer period and are not centered on a particular decision, nor do they need follow the same format. Although worship should be part of a support committee, there is more interaction that can involve practical issues in addition to spiritual ones.

COMMUNITY GUIDELINES

It is as if each of us brings a thread of silence to meeting, and it is only through our faithful worship that these threads are woven into a tight and beautiful tapestry through which we hear the Divine Presence. [Thomas Sander]

In our interactions with one another, what weaves us together? How does each of us contribute to an inviting, safe and loving community? In setting forth the following affirmations regarding individual interactions, Friends Meeting at Cambridge recognizes the central importance of making our community norms explicit. [Further guidance may be found in New England Yearly Meeting's *Faith and Practice*, 1985, The Queries, pp. 211-213]

1. We believe in, we celebrate, and are asked to nurture the best in one another; i.e. "to answer that of God in everyone."
2. We believe that our community is built upon the richness and depth of our relationships with one another.
3. We believe that trust is foundational:
 - We trust that each of us will act with integrity. *Let your word be 'Yes, Yes,' or 'No, No.'* [Matthew 5: 37]
 - We trust that we will be tender with one another, especially in times of vulnerability.
 - We *"trust the process."* [Anne Kriebel.] See #4.
4. We believe that transcendence is possible when individuals participate in meeting for worship with attention to business or a standing, clearness, or a support committee. We believe that the whole can be greater than its parts. We believe that when participants in such gatherings listen with an open heart, ask questions, carefully discern, pray, and allow the time and attention each consideration requires, way will open.
5. We believe that the needs of the individual and the needs of our community must be taken in consideration. We believe that when called to consider these sometimes-oppositional needs, much prayer and collective wisdom is called for.

Friends Meeting at Cambridge aspires to be an inviting, safe, and loving community where all can be spiritually nourished, enjoy fellowship, and engage in an honest exchange of ideas. We have all experienced painful circumstances, physical and/or emotional harm. Our race, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic, or religious background may mean that what one person might consider an innocent comment or behavior could actually be hurtful or threatening or experienced as harassment by another person.¹ Although these hurtful or painful or feeling-unsafe interactions may be **unintentional**—one person's sense of personal space may differ greatly from another's, for example—FMC recognizes that the individual impacted can best communicate their sense of hurt or violation of trust.

¹ From *FGC Gathering Policy and Procedures on Harassment*, 2016 (modified)
Page 22 of 22

We recognize that there is a distinction between conflict that arises out of miscommunication between two or more individuals and a breach of our community norms. The latter is likely to include sexual, emotional or physical harassment or abuse. These guidelines, which apply to individuals eighteen years and older.² Acknowledge that every violation of trust is unique but some require specific and concrete responses.

A word about time: Given that any violation of trust is a violation of another's spiritual condition, which impacts all of us, our beloved community is best served by the timely resolution of differences between us. Seeking Truth, listening to that of Spirit in one another, and prayer require time, however. May we, with Divine guidance, rise to the challenge of being both mindful of the urgency when addressing a violation of trust within our community and to take whatever time is needed to help one another up with a tender hand.

If You Feel Comfortable Addressing the Violation of Trust Yourself:

If you have experienced a violation of trust and **are comfortable doing so**, address the issue directly with the other individual. Arrange for a convenient time to sit together, alone, so that you can explore BOTH the intention AND the impact of an action or communication. (Arranging use of the Selleck Room for these conversations will insure privacy and quiet.) May you both listen to that of Spirit in the other and *be heard* in that same, loving, and open spirit.

Should your conversation(s) not resolve this violation of trust, ask one or two people you trust to accompany you during further conversation(s). These “witnesses” are present not to mediate or to adjudicate but to hold the space for transformation (Amanda Kemp).

Should you *not* feel comfortable to directly speak with the other individual, or should the above-described Gospel Order steps still feel unresolved, let someone from this community know. This person may be someone who can help you connect with the appropriate person(s), or you can speak directly with the Resident Friend or the clerk(s) of Ministry and Counsel. (Their names are listed in the FMC Directory.)

After careful discernment, Ministry and Counsel (M & C) may decide to:

- Appoint one or two members of M & C to meet with each party separately
- If appropriate, facilitate a meeting between the individuals involved.
- If not appropriate, M & C members will create a sustainable solution for both parties and the Meeting.
- Explore other resources both within and outside FMC and, if appropriate, encourage individuals to become involved with resources and services deemed useful.

² FMC's *Child Abuse Policy and Protocols* describes FMC's policy regarding violations of trust with children. *FMC's Policies on Discrimination, Harassment and Sexual Harassment* details violations of trust involving an FMC employee.

These FMC resources may include:

- A clearness or support group for one or both parties
- Mediation
- A restorative justice (RJ) circle³ [Not yet implemented at FMC]

Harassment and/or Abuse

There are many different types of severe violation of trust including harassment, unwanted attention, or boundary violations. Here are some examples:

- Actions or communication which are experienced as de-valuing, disrespectful, hostile, or aggressive
- Any coercion of one individual over another
- Unwanted verbal interactions of a sexual or sexually suggestive nature
- Engaging in sexual behaviors/activities in any public area of FMC
- Unwanted physical contact or unwanted physical contact of a sexual nature.
- Threats, stalking behavior or unwanted sexualized conversations regarding another person
- Refusal to abide by community norms as listed above.

Response to Abuse and/or Harassment Guidelines

If you have concerns for your safety and need an immediate response:

Contact the Resident Friend or a member of the FMC Response Committee, comprised of representatives from the Clerks Table, Ministry and Counsel, and Trustees, as well as the Resident Friend. (These same individuals, whose names are listed in the Directory, serve as the Child Abuse Response Committee.).

The Response Committee will quickly arrange a time to talk to all individuals involved and to take necessary steps to support recognition of and adherence to appropriate boundaries. In addition to providing a safe space for individuals to share their perspectives, interventions from the Response Committee may also include referring the concern to Ministry and Counsel for their assistance. The Response Committee in consultation with Ministry and Counsel will work to find a solution that involves all individuals having a place and space to worship. If so led, the Response Committee may wish to bring a concern to the attention of law enforcement agencies.

If an individual does not adhere to the Response Committee's and/or Ministry and Counsel's guidelines, the next steps may include: barring from the property, police intervention and/or a harassment protection order. **We note that calling the police related to a person of color may place that person at significantly greater risk than when calling the police related to a white person, and should be avoided whenever possible.**

³ "RJ is an approach to justice that focuses on the needs of the victims and the offenders, as well as the involved community, instead of satisfying abstract legal principles or simply isolating and punishing the offender. Restorative Justice can bring healing to the victim and the offenders and their communities." See <http://www.macucc.org/files/files/documentsmissionjustice/restorative+justice+congregation.pdf>

Miscommunications and Conflict

Excerpt, Minute approved by FMC, September 14, 2000:

Our meeting is a community of people seeking to be open to the love of God and to be caring of each other. Participation in this community needs to be based on trust. While we acknowledge our human imperfections in interacting with each other, we want to treat each other with love, compassion, and respect.

GUIDELINES FOR HOSTING AFTERTHOUGHTS⁴

Afterthoughts gives people a chance, in a smaller group, to reflect on their experiences of worship, to find out more about worship and Quaker life, and to feel closer to Friends. Though these guidelines were originally developed by Membership Committee when they were responsible, Afterthoughts is now under the care of the Meeting on Ministry on Counsel.

Before Meeting for Worship

Let the person with care of meeting know in advance that you would like to announce Afterthoughts at the rise of worship. You can find the name of the Friend with care of worship on the announcement sheet for that weekend. Emailing is a fine way to notify them.

Put up the Afterthoughts signs to let newcomers know where to come for Afterthoughts. The signs are currently kept under the mailboxes in the Library. One or two go outdoors on the railing that leads up to the Friends Center and Friends Room entrance; the smaller ones go inside, one over the entry table and one on the doorway into the Library, with arrows pointing appropriately. You can use blue painter's tape indoors. We will leave some with the signs.

At rise of Meeting

Give a friendly, inviting and clear announcement about Afterthoughts: purpose, place, duration (11:45 – 12:15, make clear it is just a half hour). A chance to meet with a smaller group, reflect on what happened for you in worship today, ask any questions you may have about Friends, all welcome.

As another group sometimes uses the parlor at 12:30, be sure to start on time and end on time. This means (membership folks reluctantly confess) that it is not a good time to go get refreshments for yourself, though those coming to Afterthoughts do sometimes get something en route.

During Afterthoughts

Your role is to:

- Make sure everyone gets to introduce them self. Participants do drift in during most of the half hour, so perhaps ask new people to give their names when they enter.
- Make sure that newcomers (and relative newcomers) get a chance to speak if they wish to – this is a primary focus and purpose of Afterthoughts. A go-round helps with this.

⁴ Revised 11/2/2018

- Keep the delicate balance between those who speak comfortably and have many ideas to share, and those who are quieter. Try to help the group stay away from theories and opinions, and closer to experiences of worship and other aspects of Quaker life.

One fruitful approach is to introduce a go-around on that morning's meeting for worship: "Please share, if you wish, something of your experience in worship today. This will help us learn a lot about Friends worship and about each other!" Or, "What brings you to Afterthoughts today?"

While a list of those who attend Afterthoughts is no longer kept, do, perhaps, note for yourself the names of people you did not know, so you can greet them when you see them again. You may become a newcomer's first familiar face in the meeting – an awesome and joyful role.

If participants express judgmental thoughts about the vocal ministry, ask them to focus on their own experience.

Feel free to contact Ministry and Counsel clerk(s) with any concerns or suggestions. Blessings and thank you!