

***A Guide to Our Faith and Our Practice***  
**Draft Revisions 2005-2006**

Dear SAYMA Friends,

As part of the ten-year review of our Guide, we are pleased to present the following proposed revisions. In Part II, We have added text about ad hoc committees, committee responsibility and yearly meeting approved changes in the composition Ministry and Nurture Committee. From Part III, we present new text on formation of worship group, consistent with good order of Friends. Part IV Testifying to the Life of the Spirit has been thoroughly reviewed and revised. We are offering new sections on Integrity and Earthcare. We are also requesting your help in discerning what threads need to be followed in expressing our Faith and Practice in the section on Sexuality, which the committee believes needs to be completely rewritten.

We know that additional seasoning is required for this *Guide* to best reflect who we are as a growing community - and that's where **your help is needed!** Please present these proposals to your meeting and provide a time when serious attention can be given them. Only **minuted** responses from a Meeting for Business will be consider by the committee in creating our final proposals to be presented to the yearly meeting sessions in June.

**The schedule for considering the revisions is:**

**August 20, 2005.** - First draft mailed to monthly meeting clerks and YM representatives.

**January 28, 2006** - **All responses must be received by this date**, so the revision committee can consider them at our February Meeting.

**February 17/18, 2006-** Faith & Practice Revision Committee meets.

**(Continued on next column)**

**April 1, 2006** - The proposed revisions that will be presented at Yearly Meeting in June will be distributed at Representative Meeting, posted on SAYMA.org and a paper copy will be mailed to your MM/PM/WG

**June 8-11, 2006** - Revisions will be considered at yearly meeting.

Please send: **(by January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2006)**

**Your email responses to:**

Free at: **freepolazzo@comcast.net**

Or

**Your print responses to:**

SAYMA Faith and Practice Revisions  
 C/o Free Polazzo  
 5525 Dorsett Shoals Lane  
 Douglasville, GA 30135-4072

Blessings,

SAYMA Faith and Practice Revision Committee:

Barbara Esther, Recording Co-Clerk, Asheville Friends Meeting  
 Larry Ingle, Chattanooga Friends Meeting  
 Missy Ivie, West Knoxville Friends Meeting  
 Geeta McGahey, Recording Co-Clerk Celo Friends Meeting  
 Melissa Meyers, Boone Friends Meeting  
 Free Polazzo, Clerk, Anneewakee Creek Friends Worship Group, Atlanta Friends Meeting

Eighth Month, 20<sup>th</sup> Day, 2005 (8/28/05)

[ORIGINAL TEXT]

## YEARLY MEETING SECTION

**Committees of yearly and representative meeting**

The nature and function of all committees established by the yearly meeting change as time and experience reveal new opportunities for Friends. Usually constituted by the yearly meeting or occasionally following action of the representative meeting, such committees and their functions are described in the Handbook. The yearly meeting nominating committee recommends to the yearly meeting names to fill positions on these committees. Current standing committees are:

[NO PREVIOUS SECTION]

**Part III:****Forming a worship group**

Beginning with the second paragraph:

[DELETE] Once such a group has come together within the SAYMA region, participants should notify both the yearly meeting's Advancement Committee and the closest monthly meeting. SAYMA Friends and, especially, Friends from the closest monthly meeting should make every effort to join in the worship of new groups and to offer such encouragement and support as is possible. In order to share in the spirit of and to observe SAYMA and monthly meeting practices and to share with them the enthusiasm and energy of new worship groups, worshippers in a new group are encouraged to visit and join in the worship of established monthly meetings and to send participants to SAYMA representative and yearly meetings.

Attendees of a worship group who wish to become members of the Religious Society of Friends must apply through the nearest monthly meeting with which they are acquainted, unless they are already a member of a distant: meeting.

[PROPOSED TEXT]

## YEARLY MEETING SECTION

**Committees of yearly and representative meeting**

[INSERT THE SENTENCES BELOW]The nature and function of all committees established by the yearly meeting change as time and experience reveal new opportunities for Friends. Usually constituted by the yearly meeting or occasionally following action of the representative meeting, such committees and their functions are described in the Handbook. The yearly meeting nominating committee recommends to the yearly meeting names to fill positions on these committees. *Ad Hoc committees are formed as the need arises; the yearly meeting clerk appoints clerks and committee members. All committees make annual reports to Yearly meeting and such special reports to representative meeting as may be necessary.* Current standing committees are:

**Ministry & Nurture Committee**, formed in 1990, supports and supplements the work of the monthly meetings' ministry and nurture groups and addresses spiritual issues that span the yearly meeting community. *SAYMA's nominating committee recommends three members and a clerk, who serve staggered two-year terms. Other members serve at the request of each monthly meeting.* It nurtures meetings and worship groups by: [The rest of this section has been previously circulated and commented on by the monthly meetings and can be found on the web. It will be distributed with the final proposal prior to representative meeting for discernment at yearly meeting]

**Part III:****Forming a worship group**

[REPLACE WITH] *For the purposes of deepening the life of the Spirit and understanding of Friends' faith and practice, a group that meets regularly for worship and wishes to identify itself as "Quaker" must establish an association with an existing Monthly Meeting. The monthly meeting assumes the functions of nurture and guidance and establishes appropriate mechanisms that address the needs of the worship group. Such a relationship can include shared worship, intervisitation, fiscal support, and observation of and participation in meetings for the conduct of business of the monthly meeting. Additionally worship groups are encouraged to participate in all yearly meeting activities. The SAYMA Ministry & Nurture Committee is available as needed to help identify appropriate pairings and to provide support and nurture for these associations. M&N is also available to work with meetings and nearby new worship groups where there are raw feelings or issues to be resolved.*

*Should an individual in a worship group desire membership in the Religious Society of Friends; application is made to the monthly meeting for consideration.*

*A worship group can request recognition from the yearly meeting, through recommendation from a monthly meeting.*

## [NEW SECTION]

*Integrity*

*“Integrity calls for obedience, or if you prefer, faithfulness to conscience illuminated by the Light Within. For Quakers this is the seat of religious authority and, therefore, the touchstone of our faith.”*  
*Wilmer Cooper, “The Testimony of Integrity”; 1991*

*Although not referred to as a “testimony” until much later, integrity implicitly formed the basis for most of the other testimonies. One of the original names of Quakers, “Friends of the Truth,” required convinced Friends to be loyal to their understanding of God’s will in their lives; these understandings were private, even as they were subsumed in and later affirmed by the collective wisdom of the meeting community. Integrity remained central to the public and personal witness of Friends and spoke of their willingness to acknowledge and submit to divine guidance in all their activities.*

*Integrity requires consistency of action and speaking the truth. “Do all aspects of your life bear the same witness?” is a modern query yet reflects an approach harkening back to the earliest years of the Religious Society of Friends. No private way of acting might differ from a Friend’s public stance; each was equally important and had to make clear the experience of God’s revelation. Friends of the Truth were called to complete obedience.*

*Integrity required a willingness to live so as to testify to the divine reality, even in harsh, threatening, and uncomfortable situations. Its demands led each Friend to live each day’s life the same way in all circumstances.*

*Historically, it led to imprisonment for refusal to swear oaths and to ostracism for refusing to say “sir” or “madam” or doff one’s hat to those who thought themselves deserving of such honors, even parents. It insisted on straightforward and honest speech. Respect for others, even those sometimes considered lowly, slaves and laborers, women and children, for examples, grew naturally out of Friends’ vital experience with God’s call. It drove Friends to insist on peaceful living, with supposed enemies as well as those less hostile.*

*Integrity implies wholeness, the exact opposite of hypocrisy, a wholeness rooted in God’s revelation to those who have discovered the divine will. It remains the basis for Quakers, their lives and ethics, and their dealings with each other, non-Friends, and the larger world.*

## [ORIGINAL TEXT]

**Peace**

*We utterly deny all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons, for any end or under any pretence whatsoever. And this is our testimony to the whole world. The Spirit of Christ, by which we are guided, is not changeable, so as once to command us from a thing as evil and again to move unto it; and we do certainly know, and so testify to the world, that the Spirit of Christ, which leads us into all Truth, will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the kingdom of Christ, nor for the kingdoms of this world.-*

Declaration from the Harmless and Innocent People of God, called Quakers (1661)

Our peace testimony is grounded in our faith and understanding of God's way. Early Quakers believed they were led by the Christ within and by the Christ of the New Testament to love those people who considered them enemies and to refrain from all wars and fighting. Though individual Quakers have participated in wars since then, Friends still affirm that the best way to relate to people is to appeal to that of God within them. Trusting in the leadings of the Spirit and respecting the Inward Light in all others can avert violent conflict.

In attending to this divine leading, we try to live in ways that promote justice and avoid the causes of war; we deny its legitimacy and seek creative alternatives; and we undertake, with impartiality, to aid those who suffer from violence and war's devastation.

Materialism, oppression, and narrow nationalism lead to war. Friends oppose materialism by living simply and working to re-order priorities toward global justice and well-being. We work to remove oppression at home and abroad by trying to reach the common humanity in both oppressor and oppressed, challenging the assertion of dominance upon which oppression is based. We reject narrow nationalism and support programs to increase our understanding of other cultures and to work for more effective world government.

Denying the legitimacy of war, Friends support those led by the Spirit into conscientious objection to military service, resistance to conscription or a military draft, war tax resistance, or other acts of civil disobedience that witness against warmaking. Friends do not recognize "just" wars, since war represents a refusal to pursue other ways of resolving conflict. We work to gain wider support for nonviolent solutions.

## [PROPOSED TEXT]

**Peace**

## [QUOTE CORRECTED]

*"All bloody principles and practices, we . . . do utterly deny, with all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons, for any end or under any pretense whatsoever. And this is our testimony to the whole world . . . The spirit of Christ, by which we are guided, is not changeable, so as once to command us from a thing as evil and again to move unto it; and we do certainly know, and so testify to the world, that the spirit of Christ, which leads us into all Truth, will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the kingdom of Christ, nor for the kingdoms of this world."*

-Declaration from the Harmless and Innocent People of God, called Quakers (1661)

Our peace testimony is grounded in our faith and understanding of God's way. Early Quakers believed they were led by the Christ within and by the *teachings* of the New Testament to love those people who considered themselves enemies and to refrain from all wars and fighting. Though individual Quakers have participated in wars since then, Friends still affirm that the best way to relate to people is to appeal to that of God within them. Trusting to the leadings of the Spirit and respecting the Inward Light in all others can avert violent conflict.

## [SECOND PARAGRAPH UNCHANGED]

An uncritical dependence on *materialism*, oppression, *narrow nationalism* and a unilateral foreign policy lead inevitably to war. *Friend's priorities* seek *a right sharing of world and natural resources*. We *also* work to remove oppression at home and abroad by trying to reach the common humanity in both oppressor and oppressed, challenging the assertion of dominance upon which oppression is based. *Thus we* support programs to increase understanding of other cultures and to work for more effective *governance*. *We aim in our business affairs and investments to pursue opportunities that promote justice and harmony*

Denying the legitimacy of war, Friends support those led by the Spirit into conscientious objection to military service, resistance to conscription or a military draft, war tax resistance, or other acts of civil disobedience that witness against *war making*. Friends do not recognize "just" wars. We work to gain wider support for nonviolent solutions *to conflicts*.

## [ORIGINAL TEXT continued]

Friends aid the victims of war and other violence out of the belief that each person is uniquely valuable. Support for refugees, programs for worldwide economic justice, and similar efforts serve not only to remove the causes of war and to aid the victims of violence and oppression, but also to encourage non-violent means of solving world problems.

We recognize that violence can manifest itself in words as well as deeds. As Friends, we endeavor to bring all aspects of our lives into harmony with our testimony. The peace we seek starts in the individual heart and its relation to God. It is expressed in our relations to parents, spouses, children, friends, and indeed in all our actions. In our daily lives - our employment, our recreation, our investments, and our relations to institutions and governments - we commit ourselves to follow God's command to be peacemakers above the demands and enticements of the secular society. In doing so, our aim is to live God's truth.

The challenge of the peace testimony is to find ways for all people to live nonviolently in a world where violence remains an ever-present threat. Friends as individuals and as a Society continue to struggle with this challenge.

[OLD TEXT] **Simplicity**

*Simplicity frees one of the clutter that interferes with communion with God.*

Martin Cobin, **The Value System of Friends**, Southern Appalachian Association of Friends, Crossville, Tennessee (May 1-3, 1970)

To the earliest Friends, simplicity meant freeing oneself of all that was unnecessary and worldly. Just as all ritual, program, and clerical functions were seen as a hindrance to worship, so elaborate and insincere speech, as well as ornamentation of dress, were seen as distractions to the right ordering of life. Adding an economic reason for simplicity, William Penn said that "the very trimmings of the vain would clothe all the naked ones."

Simplicity leads us to be honest and straightforward in mind, tongue, and heart. It can assist Friends in focusing on the essentials of life, in being open spiritually, and in following the path of love. For some Friends, this commitment has required a radical break with the conventional way of life in our materialistic age. For all of us, seeking the inner light leads to a removal of distractions and an ordering of priorities so that we may be more open to leadings of the Spirit.

Simplicity need not mean stark denial but can create joy and beauty in our lives. In use of time, habits of consumption, sharing of world resources, and indeed every aspect of daily life, simplicity is central for us because it both mirrors and deepens spiritual centeredness.

## [PROPOSED TEXT continued]

Friends aid the victims and *perpetrators* of violence, whether *from war, crime, or family strife* out of the belief that each person is uniquely valuable. Support for *prisoners*, refugees, programs for economic justice, and similar efforts serve not only to remove the causes and aid *those touched by* violence and oppression, but also to encourage nonviolent means of solving problems, *locally and globally*.

We recognize that violence can manifest itself in words as well as deeds. As Friends, we endeavor to bring all aspects of our lives into harmony with *this* testimony. The peace we seek starts in the individual heart and its relation to God. It is expressed in *all* our relations. In our daily we *struggle to find ways to* follow God's commands above *all* demands and enticements of *our* society. In doing so, our aim is to live God's truth.

[LAST PARAGRAPH UNCHANGED]

[PROPOSED TEXT] **Simplicity**

*"Simplicity frees one of the clutter that interferes with communion with God."*  
Martin Cobin, **The Value System of Friends**, Southern Appalachian Association of Friends, Crossville, Tennessee (May 1-3, 1970)

[FIRST PARAGRAPH UNCHANGED]

Simplicity leads us to be honest and straightforward in mind, tongue, and heart. It can assist Friends in focusing on the essentials of life, in being open spiritually, and in following the path of love. For some Friends, this commitment has *led to* a radical break with the conventional way of life in our materialistic age. For all of us, seeking the inner light *necessitates* a removal of distractions and an ordering of priorities *in order to* be more open to leadings of the Spirit. *It may not appear as radical as wearing plain clothing - "living plainly", as earlier Friends framed it - but it is still challenging to be a peculiar people.*

[LAST PARAGRAPH UNCHANGED]

[Old TEXT] **Equality**

*There is a principle which is pure, placed in the human mind, which in different places and ages hath had different names. it is, however, pure and proceeds from God. It is deep and inward, confined to no forms of religion nor excluded from any where the heart stands in perfect sincerity. In whomsoever this takes root and grows, of what nation soever, they become [brothers and sisters] in the best sense.* John Woolman, "Considerations on Keeping Negroes," **Works** (1774)

Friends believe that all people have the capacity to bear and respond to the Light and that all forms of human relations should reflect this spiritual truth. Deeply concerned that every individual, as a beloved child of God, be respected and afforded equal access to social opportunities, Friends believed that we are called to work toward an end to prejudice and oppression.

Each of us has God-given gifts that express themselves in different ways. Friends believe that the way in which God's gifts are realized may be shaped by the world in which we live. Our ability to both bear and respond to the Light can be affected by social prejudices that dim awareness of God's leadings.

A commitment to equality, the first of Friends social testimonies, led early Friends to affirm that no person is superior to another because of birth, wealth, or formal education. They rejected the use of honorific titles, provided expanded leadership roles for women in their communities, and eschewed "hat honor", removing one's hat as a sign of deference. They retained the traditional "thee" and "thou" to avoid the emerging seventeenth century usage of granting an undue distinction to an individual with a plural "you". Modern Friends have expanded our awareness of what equality demands, in its continued application in our daily lives.

In seeking to apply this testimony, Friends have often been in the forefront of social change. Recognition of inherent worth in all people despite individual or group differences has often caused Friends to live and act contrary to accepted societal norms, rejecting stereotyping, discrimination, and artificial barriers that separate people from one another. Equality has been the foundation of Friends approach to each other and the world.

We believe all are equally empowered by God and encourage all to speak for themselves, expressing their own experiences and goals. We must speak the truth to others as it is revealed to us, and we must listen for truth that is in them, lest we miss it. Understanding other's perspectives can change us and inform the actions we take to work toward equality. In our continuing spiritual search, we are open to revising our approach to social change as new insights arise.

We seek a world free of oppression, where laws and customs foster human dignity. We encourage all people to realize their full potential as human beings bearing the light of God.

[PROPOSED TEXT] **Equality**

*Quote: Same*

Friends believe that all people have the capacity to bear and respond to the Light and that all forms of human relations should reflect this spiritual truth. *Each of us has God-given gifts. Each of us can grow in goodness. Our differences provide prophetic openings that allow God's grace to shine through us in unique ways.*

[DELETE SECOND PARAGRAPH]

A commitment to equality, the earliest of Friends' social testimonies, *was partly an assault on pride. In keeping with the teaching of the New Testament, early Friends held the radical belief that God could speak to every person, regardless of gender, race, class, age, or formal education. This led Friends to eliminate behaviors that granted superiority based on social status or wealth.* They rejected the use of honorific titles, provided expanded leadership roles for women in their communities, and eschewed "hat honor," removing one's hat as a sign of deference. They retained the traditional "thee" and "thou" to avoid the emerging seventeenth century usage of granting an undue distinction to an *upper-class* individual with a plural "you." For these beliefs, they sometimes paid with their property, and sometimes with their lives.

*Modern Friends have wrestled with our awareness of what equality demands in its continued application in our daily lives. In order for individuals to follow their leadings, and exercise their God given gifts, social and physical barriers often must be broken down. In the last two centuries, many Friends have worked toward expanding the rights of women and people of color. More recently, Friends are beginning our work to expand equal rights regardless of sexual orientation.* Recognition of inherent worth in all people despite individual or group differences, has caused Friends to try to reject stereotyping, discrimination, and artificial barriers that separate people from one another. Equality has been the foundation of Friends' approach to each other *and the world. Friends recognize that much work still needs to be done, both in the society at large, and within our meetings, where privileges of educational attainment and social status too often prevail.*

We believe all can be empowered by God and encourage all to speak for themselves, expressing their own experiences *and understanding of God's leadings.* We must speak the truth to others as it is revealed to us, and we must listen for truth that is in them, lest we miss it. Understanding other's perspectives can change us and help our meetings discern the actions we take to work toward equality. In our continuing spiritual search, we are open to revising our approach to social change as new insights arise.

[LAST PARAGRAPH UNCHANGED]

[ORIGINAL TEXT] **The Meeting Community**

*As many candles, lighted and put in one place, do greatly augment the light, and make it more to shine forth, so when many are gathered together in the same life there is more of the glory of God.*

Robert Barclay (1678)

Friends are bound together in community by a continual process of common seeking and experience of the Light within. The community provides spiritual and emotional nurture. It also stimulates our thinking and challenges us to put into practice our convictions. In the meeting, we share fundamental ideals and values, and the meeting affirms and inspires us.

Within this fellowship, divergent leadings are often present. Friends seek a balance between the needs of the individual and those of the group. Open recognition of and respect for differences, forthright sharing, and sincere reflection can lead individuals to new insight and strengthen the meeting as a whole. It is possible to resolve differences either directly by the individuals involved or with the meeting's assistance. Unity emerges not only from agreement but also from a common search for the truth conducted in a spirit of loving concern.

Friends strive to be sensitive to others' spiritual and material needs. Both requesting and giving assistance are essential aspects of Friends' life together, and taking a warm, personal interest in one another's welfare strengthens the meeting and the individuals alike. Friends also provide spiritual support by holding in the Light those experiencing special hardship or joy. In mutual service and support, we express our love for God and reflect God's gifts to us.

All forms of sharing - spiritual, economic, domestic, co-operative service - enhance meeting unity. These experiences within the meeting enable Friends to envision new possibilities for community living and suggest practical ways to build community beyond the meeting.

Yearly meetings and other gatherings are opportunities for Friends from different areas to nurture spiritual growth and fellowship. The scattered company of SAYMA seeks to build the living community of the Spirit.

[PROPOSED TEXT] **The Meeting Community**

[KEEP QUOTE]

Friends are bound together in community by *the* continual process of *our shared* seeking of the Light within *as it calls us to be in the world*. The *meeting offers* spiritual and emotional nurture. *Through its activities it* stimulates our thinking and challenges us to put into practice our convictions. *By virtue of being in a community that shares fundamental ideals and values and is greater than the sum of its individuals, we are affirmed and inspired as well as held accountable in our faithfulness to God's leadings.*

*When* divergent *understandings emerge* Friends seek a balance between the needs of the individual and those of the *community*. Open recognition of and respect for differences, forthright sharing, and sincere reflection can lead individuals to new insight and strengthen the meeting as a whole. *Individuals may resolve their differences in a direct loving manner or they can call upon the meeting for assistance* For matters of conflict that concern the whole *meeting a threshing meeting can be called*. Harmony emerges not *merely* from coming to understanding and resolution but also from *the mutual* search for the truth conducted in a spirit of tender *listening and care*.

Friends strive to be sensitive to *each* other's spiritual and material needs. Both requesting and giving assistance are essential aspects of Friends' life together, and taking a warm, personal interest in one another's welfare strengthens the meeting and the individuals alike. *We hold in the Light* those experiencing *life changing events*, hardship or joy. *The meeting may provide clearness committees, ongoing committees of care, or meetings for healing*. Through mutual service and support, we express our love for God *and each other*.

Forms of sharing – spiritual, economic, domestic, co-operative service – enhance meeting *cohesiveness*. These experiences within the meeting enable Friends to envision new possibilities for community *life* and suggest practical ways to *widen the* meeting *circle*.

Yearly meeting *sessions and committee work, inter-meeting visitation, regional gatherings and visiting other yearly and monthly meetings* are opportunities for *Friends in our geographic area to find* nurture *for* spiritual growth and fellowship. The *widely* scattered company of SAYMA seeks to build the living community of the Spirit.

[ORIGINAL TEXT] **Education**

*“We shall never thrive upon ignorance.”*

Joseph John Gurney (1831)

*“To Friends, education is an intensely religious thing; it means the training and development of the spiritual life, the liberating of the Divine that is within us.*

Gerald K. Hibbert (1930)

Friends’ basic belief in the Inner Light, the presence of “that of God” in everyone, has guided us to promote a society based on understanding and good will. Although God’s truth transcends mere schooling, education is fundamental to full participation in that society.

Those who read and study are better equipped to pursue corporate truth within the Religious Society of Friends and better able to act as individuals in the wider world. We have a concern for the educational welfare of all.

Friends encourage the development of integrity, simplicity, moderation, and an inward sense of values. We try to foster in ourselves and our children a steady growth in self-discipline, respect for the rights and needs of each individual, and celebration of differences in others. We recognize that values are being taught - consciously and unconsciously - in our communities and institutions; we seek to encourage cooperation rather than competition, and we attempt to cultivate a sensitivity to social problems and injustices and the concern to do something about them.

These goals have been reflected in our support for and participation by adults and children in First Day School, Friends’ schools, home schooling, private and public education, and higher education. For Friends, education nurtures our own individual understanding of the Inner Light, teaches us to be guided by it, and helps us foster that understanding in others. Friends have been pioneers in providing equal educational opportunities for all people as a means toward full participation in the Society and in the wider world. In our awareness of the Light that lights everyone who comes into the world, Friends are open to listening and learning from the oppressed, the deprived, and the excluded.

We look upon education as a lifelong process. Because knowledge and inspiration do not lie solely in one religion, group, or text, we search widely for diverse contributions to a corporate truth. Coupled with our concept of continuing revelation of Truth is a belief that we have a continuing need to study and open ourselves to new learning.

[PROPOSED TEXT] **EDUCATION**

*Friends’ basic belief in the Inward Light, the presence of “that of God” in everyone has guided us to support educational opportunities, including schools that will encourage an individual’s development, promote moral growth, and sharpen ethical insights. While studying reading, writing, and arithmetic and “all things useful in creation” may appear to be elementary or mundane, Friends see them as the necessary foundation of a complete education. Although God’s truth transcends schooling, formal education makes participation in society more likely. Thus, we have a concern for the educational welfare of all.*

*From the earliest days of their existence, Friends taught both boys and girls equally and non-violently, emphasizing their belief that students should not be punished for their mistakes, but should be taught in a manner that would bring out their best. Due to Friends’ love of God’s creation, much of early educational efforts emphasized the natural and practical sciences. Learning modern languages, geography, and history prepared students to engage in their world. Such practical ends have been reflected in our support for and participation in many settings: Friends’ schools, home schooling, private, public, post-secondary, and vocational education and training.*

*Even more critical is the attempt by Friends to foster in ourselves and our children integrity, simplicity, and an inward sense of values. We recognize that values are being taught-consciously and unconsciously- in religious education and in our homes and communities. In our awareness of the Light which illumines all that come into the world, Friends are open to listening and learning from nature and the abstract, from people with authority and those without a voice. We look upon education as a lifelong process. Because knowledge and inspiration do not lie solely in one religion, group, or text, we search widely for diverse contributions to a corporate truth.*

[ORIGINAL TEXT] **Government**

*The power and dominion of the conscience are the province of God, [who] alone can properly instruct and govern it. No one whatsoever may lawfully force the conscience of others regardless of the authority or office he [or she] bears in the government of this world.* --- Robert Barclay, **Apology** (1676)

American government, endorsing the principles of equality, freedom, and justice, emerged from an intellectual and political climate influenced significantly by Friends. Today, though governmental policies and decisions often pose difficult problems for Friends, we affirm our corporate and individual commitment to influence governmental actions through thoughtful witness or considered resistance.

Conscientious Friends take this commitment in various directions: some work within government, some work to influence public officials or actions, some withdraw from participation, some resist or oppose government claims.

Recognizing that the exercise of authority intensifies the spiritual struggle for those who work within government, we seek unity in the Truth with those we want to influence and believe this unity may be reached if we remain faithful in our witness. As human beings, all of us sometimes find compromise expedient, even necessary; but the decisions of government officials affect far more lives than their own. We therefore seek to encourage and call them to the standard of Truth in their actions.

Friends often are led to withhold their assent from harmful governmental policies and to work to change them through individual action, meeting action, and support for the Friends Committee on National Legislation. Many Friends communicate frequently with governmental representatives to encourage their support for positive legislation, and many work to elect candidates who hold positions acceptable to Friends.

As a body, the Religious Society of Friends has never recognized the claims of government as absolutes, for we seek to live the truth beyond human institutions. Friends traditionally have refrained from swearing oaths - instead, we affirm the truth. We encourage mediation and negotiation rather than litigation to resolve disputes. Friends have supported conscientious objection to military service. Individual Friends have felt it right, under the leadings of the Spirit, to develop these positions and have challenged the corporate body of Friends to consider new testimonies, such as resisting war taxation and noncooperation with certain governmental policies. In such cases, Friends' steadfast and faithful witness has an influence that often transcends its initial effect.

While we work to see our principles reflected in governmental decisions and actions, we realize that government even at its best can only provide a framework to foster justice, peace, and respect for human differences. These ideals become reality only when individuals, under the conviction of love, daily live the life of the peaceable kingdom.

[PROPOSED TEXT] **GOVERNMENT**

Quotation- leave alone

[KEEP FIRST PARAGRAPH]

[DELETE SECOND PARAGRAPH AND REPLACE WITH:]

*Some* Friends are led to withhold their assent or resist harmful governmental policies and *many* work to change them through individual or meeting action and support *lobbying*. Friends *also* communicate frequently with governmental representatives to encourage their support for positive legislation, and work to elect candidates who hold positions acceptable to Friends.

Recognizing that the exercise of authority intensifies the spiritual struggle for those who work within government, we seek unity in the Truth with those we want to influence and believe that this unity may be reached if we remain faithful in our witness. We therefore seek to encourage government *officials to actively listen to a diversity of voices and negotiate to find mutually helpful solutions*. *They*, as all human beings, *may* sometimes find compromise expedient, even necessary; but *we ask them to be cognizant of the many lives their* decisions affect. We therefore seek to encourage and call them to *the* standard of Truth as we have come to know it *through our lives and worship*.

[4<sup>TH</sup> PARAGRAPH WAS MOVED TO ABOVE (2<sup>ND</sup>)]

As a body, the Religious Society of Friends has never recognized the claims of government as absolutes, for we seek to live the truth beyond human institutions. Friends traditionally have refrained from swearing oaths- instead we affirm the truth. We encourage mediation and negotiation rather than litigation to resolve disputes. Friends support conscientious objection to military service. Individual Friends under the leadings of the Spirit have challenged the corporate body of Friends to consider new *witnesses* such as *war tax resistance, marriage equality, and abortion rights*. In such cases, Friends' steadfast and faithful *effort* has an influence that often transcends its initial expectations.

While we work to see our principles reflected in governmental decisions and actions, we realize that government even at its best can only provide a framework to foster justice, peace, and respect for human differences. These ideals become reality only when individuals, under the conviction of love, live *daily* the life of the peaceable *community*.

## [OLD TEXT] Sexuality

*The mystery of sex continues to be greater than our capacity to comprehend it, no matter how much we learn about it. We engage in it, in often too frantic efforts to enjoy it but, more subtly, also to try to fathom its ever recurring power over us. Surely this power and its mystery relate to the mystery of God's relationship to us.*

Mary Calderone, **Human Sexuality and the Quaker Conscience** (1973)

Friends regard life as a whole, to be lived in the Spirit. At all stages of life, sexuality is an important part of that whole; it is capable of tapping an individual's deepest feelings, often yielding a sense of dimension transcending the individual.

Recognizing the power of sexual feelings, we as Friends seek to know ourselves and to express our own sexuality in loving ways, calling and answering to that of God in others. We recognize that responsible sexuality varies, and we hold that that which is of God is not to be condemned by the children of God. Accordingly, Friends seek to deal with sexuality as an expression of the love of God within human kind. We refrain from offering judgment upon any given manifestation of sexuality unless it is harmful in its personal or societal results.

Exploitation and manipulation of others for selfish ends have no place in the lives of Friends, nor does casual disregard for one's own feelings or those of others. When violence or abuse erupts in sexual relationships, the wound may be deep and lasting. Although we live in a society where sex is heavily exploited in the marketplace and where many countenance infidelities and casual encounters, we hold to the principle that sexuality is not a commodity but a powerful force that can transform life in ways we cannot predict. Realizing that both sadness and joy may be attendant upon human sexuality, Friends stand ready to provide comfort and support.

We encourage education about all aspects of sexuality at the earliest appropriate ages. We encourage openness, honesty, and mutual respect, which promote healthy personal growth and prevent mistakes with long-term individual and social consequences.

Families, whatever their configuration, deserve the meeting's love and care. Although Friends regard the creation of life as sacred, we also feel that every child has a right to be wanted and loved. As a yearly meeting, we have not reached full clarity on the elective termination of pregnancy. Those facing this choice may find help through trusted Friends or a clearness committee. Further reflection and insight opened by the Spirit may lead the way for growth and maturation for the meeting as well as individuals.

In the context of the light, we are called to examine whether all aspects of our lives bear consistent witness. Friends seek to love and understand, not to condemn. We trust that each other's sexuality will be expressed in loving and responsible ways.

## Sexuality

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### [QUESTIONS TO HELP DISCERN PROPOSED REVISIONS]

A: How do Friends define responsible sexual expression? Our current F & P speaks in glowing generalities. Do we need clearer boundaries? What are they? How is healthy sexuality expressed among Friends? Does this include respect for celibacy as a sexual choice along with an acknowledgement that it is sometimes a necessity?

B: Are we willing to spell out what is unhealthy sexuality? What can we say regarding disparate age of sexual partners, especially sex with children or minors or sexual expression within families? What procedures do we follow when incest is discovered by SAYMA Friends in their Meeting's families?

C: Do we value the choice of marriage? If so, how? Do we value the choice of a committed relationship without a legalized marriage? If so, how? Do we value the choice of Singleness? If so, how? Do we value the choice of remaining single? Is so, how?

D How do Friends deal with Sexually Transmitted Disease?

E: Different religions place the beginning of life anywhere from conception to first breath. Do Friends have clarity on this??

F: Are there ways we can act to take away the occasion of abortion while still having safe and legal abortions available when that is the choice or need of a woman? What is the role of the father when an abortion is considered? How do Friends plan to handle political rejection of legalized abortion and a possible return to illegal abortion? How do we counsel couples planning to have children so that every child is wanted and welcomed?

[ORIGINAL TEXT]

**Nurture of Children**

*But Jesus called them to him, saying, "Let the children come unto me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."*

Luke 18:16-17 (RSV)

*To watch the spirit of children, to nurture them in Gospel Love, and labour to help them against that which would mar the beauty of their minds, is a debt we owe them; and a faithful performance of our duty not only tends to their lasting benefit and our own peace, but also to render their company agreeable to us.*

John Woolman (1758)

The foundation of spiritual life is laid in the family. As members of the family foster their own spiritual growth, children come to sense the presence of God. This foundation gives them an assurance and security that helps them order their relationships with God, with others, with nature, and with themselves. By consistently practicing Quaker principles of simplicity, honesty, creative response to conflict, nonviolence, service and love, parents instill these values in their children and also foster the essential attitudes of self-worth, self-confidence, and self-discipline.

A Quaker family, whatever its configuration, is rooted in the wider community of Friends. Grounded in love, it seeks to nurture every member through full acceptance, respect for each other's choices, and common experiences characterized by caring, compassion, open and supportive communication, understanding, and a sense of humor. Friends seek to strengthen and learn from the child's sense of wholeness. We believe that through the family we learn that the source of human love is God's love for us.

This environment provides a context in which children learn morality. Parents have the responsibility to set limits and to make themselves heard as well as to listen. We often have the task of clarifying Friends' values in relation to societal influences and pressures. Friends often express the peace testimony, for example, by refusing to buy war toys and refraining from corporal punishment. It is essential that Quakers educate their children about creative responses to conflict, the consequences of violent behavior, discernment in sexual activities, and the dangers of addiction. We see loving and teaching, rather than punishing, as the focus of discipline.

We bear corporate and individual responsibility for children within the meeting, who learn from all their experiences with Friends. Although the activities of children sometimes may conflict with the need of Friends for silence in meeting for worship, we seek solutions that foster growth in the Spirit for all. In recognition of each member's equality in the Light, Quaker children and adults call each other by first names or full names, avoiding titles, and regard each other with mutual respect.

A monthly meeting alive with the Spirit provides support for children, parents, families, caregivers, and teachers, all of whom need loving care. We often fall short of our ideals. However, in nurturing our children and youth - as individuals, families, and meetings - we shape the Religious Society of Friends and witness to the wider world. It is a responsibility we do not take lightly.

[PROPOSED TEXT]

**Children**

[DELETE BOTH PREVIOUS QUOTES AND SUBSTITUTE:]

*Our children are given to us for a time to cherish, to protect, to nurture, and then to salute as they go their separate ways. They too have the light of God within, and a family should be a learning community in which children not only learn skills and values from parents, but in which adults learn new ways of experiencing things and seeing things through young eyes.*

Elizabeth Watson, 1980, 'Parents and Children in the Quaker Home'

[DELETE FIRST TWO PARAGRAPHS]

*Children are a gift from God and our care of them as they grow to adulthood is our gift to the future of the world. The family inevitably influences one's spiritual life.* Children are nourished by their family and meeting's love and care, *both of which provide* an environment in which children *develop a sense of* morality. Parents have the responsibility to set limits and to make themselves heard as well as to listen. We often have the task of clarifying Friends' values in relation to societal influences and pressures. Friends often express the peace testimony, for example, by refusing to buy war toys and refraining from corporal punishment. It is essential that Quakers educate their children about creative responses to conflict, the consequences of violent behavior, discernment in sexual activities, and the dangers of addiction. We see loving and teaching, rather than punishing, as the focus of discipline.

*Within the meeting,* we bear corporate and individual responsibility for children, who learn from all their experiences with Friends. Although the activities of children sometimes may conflict with the need of Friends for silence in meeting for worship, we seek solutions that foster growth in the Spirit for all. *To recognize* each member's equality in the Light, Quaker children and adults call each other by first names or full names, avoiding titles, and regard each other with mutual respect.

A monthly meeting alive with the Spirit provides support for children, parents, families, caregivers, and teachers, all of whom need loving care. We often fall short of our ideals. However, in nurturing our children and youth, *we provide for them a more hopeful future,* shape the Religious Society of Friends, and witness to the wider world. It is a responsibility we do not take lightly.

**[PROPOSED NEW SECTION] Earthcare**

The current version has no section on Earthcare.

*“ It would go a great way to caution and direct people in their use of the world, that they were better studied and known in the creation of it. For how could [they] find the confidence to abuse it, while they should see the Great Creator stare them in the face, in all and every part thereof.”*

—William Penn, 1693

*Our care of the earth is rooted in our profound love of God and the gift of Creation. It has emerged as a natural, spirit-led extension of Friends’ long established witnesses in response to the rapidly increasing destruction of Earth’s ecological systems.*

*In accordance with our testimonies of integrity, peace, equality, and simplicity, we recognize the sacredness of all life, the interconnection of all living things, and the balance required to sustain the whole community of life. We recognize that the human violence directed against our fragile biosphere is ultimately suicidal. In response, we are led to educate ourselves and to witness both personally and publicly.*

*We educate ourselves by learning the far-reaching consequences of the activities of our daily lives — our use of energy, our housing choices, our modes and distances of travel, our diets, and our consumption habits. We witness personally by living more in harmony with the earth and sharing its bounty equitably with our fellow beings, and in doing so we become patterns and examples of Earthcare for Friends and others. We witness publicly by advocating for cultural changes and institutional and government policies that are consistent with our Earthcare testimony.*