

A Guide to Our Faith and Our Practice
Draft Revisions – for YM 2007

Dear SAYMA Friends,

As part of the ten-year review of our Guide, we present the following proposed revisions for review by the Constituent Meetings of SAYMA. The committee plans that these will be the last revisions your meeting will need to review. F & P Revision Committee has decided not to make changes to the queries or the bibliography. If others are led to do so, we invite them to join the committee to see if way opens for those changes.

From Part III, we present new text for the sections on “Becoming a Preparative Meeting and “Becoming a Monthly Meeting” that conform to the text approved for the “Becoming Worship Group” section at Yearly Meeting this year. We revised the sample marriage certificate in the Procedure for Marriage section to reflect the option of either same sex or different sex marriage as in the rest of the marriage section.

Part IV, Testifying to the Life of the Spirit has been partially revised. We are offering a new section on Integrity and revisions to the sections on The Meeting Community (renamed “Community”) and Government. We decided not to recommend changes to the section on Sexuality, as so many Meetings liked what we already have.

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 Business Meeting. According to SAYMA's Guide to our Faith and our Practice, **minuted** responses from **Monthly Meetings** for Business are needed for the committee to consider in framing the final recommendations to be presented to the Yearly Meeting sessions in June, 2007.

The schedule for considering these revisions is:

By: September 1, 2006. - First draft mailed to monthly meeting clerks and YM representatives.

By January 9, 2007 - Minuted responses must be received by this date, for the revision committee to consider them at our February Meeting.

February 2-4, 2007- Faith & Practice Revision Committee meets.

By March 31, 2007 - The proposed revisions **to** be presented at Yearly Meeting in June will be posted on SAYMA.org and a paper copy will be mailed to your MM/PM/WG. We will also email copies to clerks and SAYMA representatives listed in the SAYMA directory.

June 14-16, 2007 - Revisions will be considered at yearly meeting.

Please email your **responses to me by January 9th, 2007** at:
freepolazzo@comcast.net (preferred method)

Or

Send your paper responses to arrive by January 9th, 2007 to:

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
Missy Ivie, West Knoxville Friends Meeting
Geeta McGahey, Recording Co-Clerk Celo Friends Meeting
Kathleen Mavournin, West Knoxville Friends Meeting (editor)
Melissa Meyer, Boone Friends Meeting
Free Polazzo, Clerk, Anneewakee Creek Friends Worship Group,
Atlanta Friends Meeting

Eighth Month, 24th Day, 2006

(Continued on next column)

PART IV TESTIFYING TO THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

[NEW SECTION] **Integrity**

*"Swear not at all... let your 'yes' be 'yes' and your 'no' be 'no.'"
(Matthew 5:34)*

"If our inward leading is to be "doers of the truth", then integrity needs to be at the center of our being, at the center of our consciousness, and at the center of our outward witness."

Wilmer Cooper, "The Testimony of Integrity"; 1991

1. Although not referred to as a testimony until much later, integrity implicitly forms the basis for most of the other testimonies. Integrity implies wholeness, a wholeness rooted in the Truth available to those willing to open every aspect of life to the transforming influence of the Spirit. One of the original names of Quakers, "Friends of Truth", implied Friends' understanding that the light of Truth reaches into every corner of our lives. These understandings were private, even as they were subsumed in and later affirmed by the collective wisdom of the meeting community. Integrity remains central to the public and personal witness of Friends and speaks of our willingness to seek and respond to divine guidance in all activities.

2. Integrity requires consistency of action and straightforward and honest speech. "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. From the beginning, Friends have sought a unity in their private way of acting, their public stance and their relation to the natural world. Each is equally important. Integrity calls us to live under divine guidance in all three spheres.

3. Integrity requires a willingness to live a life that testifies to the divine reality, even in harsh, threatening, and uncomfortable situations. The demands of a life of integrity lead each Friend to live a consistent manner that exemplifies faithfulness in living out all the testimonies. Historically, Friends commitment to integrity 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 these honors, even parents. Currently in our region, SAYMA Friends risk harsh criticism and loss of income for their activities for social and racial justice, diversity in marriages and their opposition to war, violence, patriarchy and other inhumane practices.

4. Integrity for Friends is grounded in relationship to this Ultimate Reality, which is larger than our egos. Friends seek to make this relationship central to all our speech and actions. The testimony of integrity is not simply telling the truth; it is speaking and acting in and from the divine in each situation. It means awakening to God and the center of one's life rather than being dominated by one's desires, anxieties, vanities, possessions or the esteem of others. Never perfect, but learning from our mistakes, Friends depend upon one another to learn together the meaning of integrity.

[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)

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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.

[PROPOSED TEXT] ~~THE MEETING~~ COMMUNITY

[Keep Barclay quote:]

"We prefer to hold up the vision of our meetings practicing listening, compassion, generosity, humility, gentleness, patience-and, most of all forgiveness, love and peace. When we focus on our oneness and unity in the Love that is God, it's tempting to believe that we will all live happily ever after together, with never an unkind word or misunderstanding, much less legitimate complaints, anger or real nastiness. The challenge of course is to hold up and live out the vision while acknowledging and accepting the reality of our own flawed humanity and that of those we live with." Patricia Loring Listing Spirituality: Corporate Practice Among Friends, page 37

1. Friends *of all ages* are bound together in community by *the* continual process of *our shared* seeking of the Light ~~within~~. *The meeting offers* spiritual and emotional nurture *when we live as we are called to be in the world*. Our life together *provides an opportunity to listen more deeply and to look more truthfully at how we do live in the world*. *The meeting community affirms, inspires, and holds us accountable in our faithfulness to God's leadings*.
2. Open recognition of and respect for differences, forthright sharing, and sincere ~~corporate~~ reflection, can lead ~~individuals~~ to new insights and strengthen the meeting as a whole. *When* Friends have conflicts it affects the entire meeting. *All Friends should be encouraged to resolve their conflicts in a direct loving manner. Alternatively, the meeting may offer assistance. 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. Unity is not sameness of belief, but the oneness of people drawn together in love and concern for each other, grounded in the Spirit.*
3. ~~Ministering Friends strive to be sensitive to each other's spiritual and material needs builds and strengthens community.~~ 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. When we join in mutual service and support, whether in our home communities, the wider community or the world, we are expressing our love for God and one another.*

[ORIGINAL TEXT] **The Meeting Community**

5. 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

~~4. 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.~~

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

6 *The interconnectedness of all life has called and continues to call Friends to serve the community beyond the meetinghouse door. Friends strive to build the blessed community everywhere they go. SAYMA Friends are active in Wider Quaker Organizations, peace work, racial justice, environmental preservation and other spirit-led activities.*

7. *Understanding of God's love does not stop at the meetinghouse door. Peace, equality, integrity, simplicity and community mean little unless they are practiced in relation to all others. It is in our actions that our faith has true life.*

[The committee agreed to present this section without the old/new version we previously presented. Instead we show the changes from the original as strikethroughs]

REVISED TEXT] Government

1. *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)

2. 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~~

3. *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 ECNL or support for Wider Quaker Organizations . Friends also communicate frequently with governmental representatives to encourage their support for positive legislation, and work to elect candidates who uphold the values expressed in Quaker testimonies.*

4. 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 listen actively 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.*

[4TH PARAGRAPH WAS MOVED TO ABOVE (2ND)]

5. *When Friends discern discordance between our conscience and governmental action, we are called to act on behalf of justice and freedom, even when that means questioning or disobeying worldly government. Historically,*

when conscience has demanded it, Friends have often opposed governmental authority to follow our conscience. From refusing to swear an oath in a court of law to hiding people escaped from slavery in our homes to providing sanctuary to illegal aliens, Friends have a long tradition of civil disobedience.

6. ~~As a body, the Religious Society of Friends has never recognized the claims of government as absolute, 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, immigration and opposition to patriarchy. Friends support the making of decisions on reproduction and family planning by individuals in the context of their families and their communities, unhindered by legal proscriptions. In such cases, Friends' steadfast and faithful efforts has have an influence that often transcends its initial expectations. To be true to our experience of the Spirit, Friends do not hold any human institution to be higher than corporate Truth.~~

6. 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.

[The committee agreed to present this section without the old/new version we previously presented. Instead we show the changes from the original as strikethroughs]

SECTION 3: PROCEEDING IN THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

Planning for the wedding

1. The oversight committee, together with the couple, arranges to meet legal requirements and to accomplish the marriage with simplicity and reverence. The reception, if any, is also part of their responsibility.

2. The oversight committee must know the legal requirements where the marriage will occur. It is the couple's responsibility to secure the marriage license or other legal form to be filed, by the committee, with the county clerk or similar officer after the marriage has taken place. Some localities have a special form for the Religious Society of Friends, but if not the committee can usually change the standard wording to comply with Friends' procedures. An approved meeting member must sign to represent the meeting, and others to fill the required number of witnesses.

3. The marriage certificate shall be prepared, well in advance, in a form similar to the following but carefully worded to incorporate the particular declarations that will be spoken by the couple and have been previously agreed upon with the committee for clearness:

Whereas, A. B., of _____, ~~son~~ *child* of C. B. and H.B., of _____, and D. E., of _____, ~~daughter~~ *child* of F. E. and M. E., of _____, having declared their intentions of marriage with each other to _____ Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends held at _____, their proposed marriage was allowed by the meeting.

4. Now this is to certify to whom it may concern, that for the accomplishment of their intentions, this _____ day of the _____ month, in the year ~~of our Lord~~ _____, they, A. B. and D. E., appeared in a meeting for worship of the Religious Society of Friends, held at _____, and A. B. *and* taking D. E. *taking each other* by the hand did on this solemn occasion declare that ~~he took her, D. E., to be his wife,~~ *they promise* promising with divine assistance to be unto *each other* ~~her a~~ loving and faithful husband *partners* so long as they both shall live; and ~~then in the same assembly D. E. did in like manner declare that she took him, A. B., to be her husband,~~ promising with Divine assistance to be unto him a loving and faithful wife so long as they both shall live. And moreover they, A. B. and D.E. *; [~~she, according to the custom of marriage, assuming the surname of her husband*~~] did, as further confirmation thereof, then and there, to this certificate set their hands.

A.B. _____
D.E.B. _____

And we, having been present at the marriage, have as witnesses hereunto set our hands.

**This A phrase may be added is omitted when the woman does not assume her husband's surname. one or both of a couple chooses to change his and/or her name.*

5. Many choose to hand-letter their certificates on parchment or fine paper. ~~Certificates also may be purchased from Friends Yearly Meeting Office, 1515 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA.~~

6. The oversight committee and the couple to be married should designate in advance persons to carry out the following responsibilities: explaining meeting for worship and Friends' wedding procedures; reading the certificate after the couple signs; closing the meeting; inviting those present to sign the certificate as witnesses.

The wedding itself

7. At the time appointed, the meeting for worship on the occasion of marriage gathers in silence. For the benefit of non-Friends, the person appointed explains the meaning of the worship and the procedure to follow, unless the invitations have already done so.

8. After a suitable time, as they are moved, the couple will rise and, taking each other by the hand, declare in words to this effect:
In the presence of God and these our friends I take thee _____ to be my ~~wife [husband]~~, *wife/husband/partner* promising with Divine assistance to be unto thee a loving and faithful ~~husband [wife]~~ *wife/husband/partner* so long as we both shall live.

9. The couple will then sign the marriage certificate, and the appointed Friend will read it aloud.

10. In the period of worship to follow, any may speak as they are moved. After the rise of the meeting, everyone present is invited to sign the marriage certificate.

[The committee agreed to present this section without the old/new version we previously presented. Instead we show the changes from the original as strikethroughs]

SECTION 3: PROCEEDING IN THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

Becoming a preparative meeting

1. A worship group which has achieved a measure of stability in attendance and worship and which desires to organize and conduct its business in the manner of Friends may become a preparative meeting. A preparative meeting is organized in the manner of a monthly meeting, performing all functions of a monthly meeting except major procedures such as overseeing marriages or taking new members into the Religious Society of Friends.

2. A preparative meeting places itself under the care of the ~~closest~~ *an existing SAYMA* monthly meeting, *usually the same one that cared for it as a worship group.* ~~which is able to give it the spiritual support and the organizational help it needs. The monthly meeting oversees the procedural functions of the a preparative meeting and gives it the same spiritual support and material encouragement it has~~ *It would have given the a worship group.* The monthly meeting which has the care of a preparative meeting should have a committee whose responsibility is to see that *organizational help, spiritual support and material* needs of the preparative meeting are met ~~and to oversee the progress of the meeting.~~ The preparative meeting should report regularly to the monthly meeting's meeting *for business.* ~~In the absence of a monthly meeting able to oversee a preparative meeting, the preparative meeting may be placed under the care of SAYMA, which may appoint an oversight committee to proceed in place of the corresponding monthly meeting committee.~~

3. A preparative meeting may continue indefinitely in that status; however, it will ~~probably~~ *likely* look forward to growth and development which will lead it to become a monthly meeting. ~~Attendees of the preparative meeting who wish to become members of the Religious Society of Friends must apply through a monthly meeting.~~

Becoming a monthly meeting

1. When Friends attending a preparative meeting have a sense of their readiness to form a monthly meeting, they may apply by letter for certification from the monthly meeting overseeing them. The letter should include as fully as possible a sense of the spiritual readiness of the meeting, as well as an analysis of its organizational ability to fulfill the functions of a monthly meeting and a sense of its purpose and place within its own geographical community.

2. Upon receipt of the letter, the oversight committee appointed by the monthly meeting may meet with the preparative meeting for a period of one to three months to observe its meetings for business, to discuss any concerns arising from the letter or from other matters, and to share in the spiritual life of the meeting. When the oversight committee concurs in the preparative meeting's readiness for certification, it will recommend to its own monthly meeting *for business* that the meeting be certified. If the meeting ~~concurs,~~ *approves,* the preparative meeting will be notified by letter.

3. A new monthly meeting wanting to be affiliated with SAYMA must request the sponsoring meeting to recommend to the Yearly Meeting business session that formal recognition be granted. A

date for the formal certification will then be set, and all monthly meetings, preparative meetings, and worship groups in SAYMA will be notified and invited to send representatives to share in the certification proceedings. .If the preparative meeting has been under the care of the yearly meeting, the yearly meeting oversight

committee may recommend certification for the approval of the representative meeting for the yearly meeting.

4. Queries for a preparative meeting wishing to become a monthly meeting may be found in the query section of this **Guide**.