

MARRIAGE and COMMITMENT

Introduction

*Our Life is love, and peace, and tenderness: and bearing one with another,
And forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another:
But praying one for another, and helping one another up with a tender hand.*

— Isaac Pennington, 1667

“... This is my beloved and this is my friend...”

— Song of Solomon 5:16

The Friends' wedding ceremony evolved from a reaction to 17th century British law requiring *official State clergy* to assure legitimacy, and inheritance. Understanding this allows the contemporary Friend insight into the wording and form of the traditional Quaker ceremony. Initially the State did not recognize the private Friends' ceremony and considered children born to Friends' unions illegitimate. George Fox, himself, to counter the attack that Friends were impulsive, recommended long engagements, public ceremonies, twelve adult witnesses, and submitting the wedding certificate to a magistrate. Friends also commenced posting public notice of their intentions to marry, as well as having all meetings be open to public scrutiny. Eventually the Friends' ceremony was accepted as legal.

The spiritual journey of an individual can be enhanced and strengthened in a loving, committed relationship. Friends recognize that some couples are called into a sacred, lifelong relationship in a ministry of caring, which with Divine assistance may open the door to deep and unreserved love, to forgiveness, to sharing strength, to trust and to the nurture of each other's growth. Some call the process to recognize this relationship “marriage”; some call it “ceremony of commitment”; some may call it by another name. The couple determines the choice of the name.

*In the true marriage (committed) relationship the independence of the
husband and wife (partners) is equal, their dependence mutual, and
their obligations reciprocal.*

— Aphorism favored by Lucretia Mott, c. 1850:
(language adapted by North Pacific Yearly Meeting 1993)

When a couple, regardless of sexual orientation, feels called into such a sacred relationship, they seek clearness with their Monthly Meeting. When the Meeting finds clearness in the couple, and clearness within the Meeting to take their relationship under the care of the Meeting and God's guidance, a Meeting for Worship is specially called for public affirmation and celebration of the couple's lifetime commitment to one another. The ceremony itself takes place in a Meeting for Worship. In an atmosphere of quiet and reverence, the promises of the couple are made to one another without the help of a third person.

The caring friendship with a life partner is a precious thing. Selection of this person should be undertaken with prayer and great care to assure that the decision considers all aspects of compatibility. In order to explore compatibility, the couple discusses their spiritual beliefs and the Quaker testimonies. They will not agree on everything. It is essential that they respect each other and learn to live with their disagreements. Additionally, the couple considers financial arrangements and, if appropriate, considers child-rearing practices. If there are children of either partner, the couple reviews and evaluates their

shared commitments to the well being of the children. Other issues to consider are pace and style of living, sexual compatibility, and respect for each other at all levels including intellectual understanding and the deepest spiritual outlook. The couple looks within, and at each other, to assure that a tender, loving, lifelong commitment is their intent. Ideally, kindness prevails in a Friends' union. Friends endeavor to support the deepening of relationships, recognizing that the quality of family life and community life are interdependent. The Meeting undertakes a special responsibility for the care of the relationships in the Meeting and also needs to proceed prayerfully in its decision.

The joining of two people "is the work of the Lord only, and not the priests' or magistrates; for it is God's ordinance and not man's, and therefore friends cannot consent that they should join them together: for we marry none; it is the Lord's work, and we are but witnesses."

— George Fox 1669

A LIST OF COMMON PRACTICES

- The couple writes a letter of intention, signed by both parties, to the Monthly Meeting. The couple should understand that wedding plans are not to be made prior to the request and clearness process outlined here.
- The Monthly Meeting appoints a Clearness Committee.
- The couple and the Clearness Committee explore the rightness of the relationship for marriage or commitment. The committee makes available books and pamphlets on marriage and information on Quaker resources on marriage.
- The committee reviews with the couple the promises they propose to exchange during the ceremony and makes sure the words of the certificate are consistent with them.
- The Clearness Committee makes sure that the welfare and rights of any children of either partner have been properly considered and legally secured.
- The Clearness Committee informs itself of all necessary legal requirements.
- The Clearness Committee reports the findings of the couple and the committee to the Monthly Meeting.
- When the Monthly Meeting approves the marriage, it appoints an Arrangements Committee.
- The Arrangements Committee is responsible for seeing that the ceremony and reception are accomplished with dignity, reverence, and simplicity.
- The couple and the Arrangements Committee plan the ceremony in detail. The date, time, and place of the ceremony are reported to the Monthly Meeting as soon as possible. Arrangements are made for the rehearsal, for the choice of persons to read the marriage certificate and for the opening and closing of the Meeting for Worship.
- The couple sends out invitations and arranges for the writing of the certificate.
- The Arrangements Committee informs itself of all legal responsibilities. The couple informs themselves of all legal requirements and arranges for the appropriate license for use where there is no clergy. See Florida Statutes #741.04; or the appropriate Georgia Statutes or South Carolina Statutes.
- The couple gives the certificate and the license to the Arrangements Committee before the ceremony.

- The Arrangements Committee sees that all applicable legal requirements have been met and that the proper license has been obtained. The committee also ensures that the license is signed and dated by the couple, the Clerk of the Meeting, and any other legally required person, and is returned to the proper government office within the time required by law.
- The couple rehearse their vows with each other. They sign the Certificate during the ceremony.
- The Arrangements Committee oversees the signing of the certificate after the Meeting for Worship, seeing that it is signed by those who were present, as witnesses. The committee also gives a copy of the text of the certificate to the Recording Clerk of the Meeting for the records.
- The Arrangements Committee reports to the Meeting whether the marriage has been accomplished, whether the applicable legal requirements have been satisfied, whether the certificate has been properly recorded, and any name changes that result from the marriage, for the recording in the minutes of the Monthly Meeting.
- At the time of the marriage, a Committee for the Continuing Care of the Marriage is appointed. This committee is led to periodically hold up in the Light the partners in this union. Often the members of the Arrangements Committee serve in this capacity.

The Process

Request

When a couple, regardless of sexual orientation, feels led to affirm their lifelong commitment under the care of a Monthly Meeting, they must first seek clearness. When both partners are members of the same Monthly Meeting, they write a letter to the Meeting stating their intention. This letter will be read at the Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business. A Clearness Committee is appointed. Following the good order of Friends, the couple will find that they need several months or more between the sending of the request and the desired date of the celebration. If one member of the couple holds membership in another Monthly Meeting or is not a member of Friends, he or she requests a “letter of clearness” from his or her home Meeting or other religious organization stating that organization’s knowledge if any reason exists why the person should not become married at this time. This letter of clearness is sent to the hosting Monthly Meeting’s Clearness Committee. If one member of a couple is unaffiliated with any religious community, the Clearness Committee is responsible for discerning the way forward. If neither person is a Friend, the Monthly Meeting must decide whether to enter into the long-term, deep and abiding process of taking the couple’s relationship under the care of the Meeting. Both the Meeting and the couple need to recognize that this is a two-way commitment between the couple and the Monthly Meeting. It is important in this process that the Meeting’s love and care for both be affirmed.

Clearness Committee

When the request is received, a Clearness Committee is appointed by the Monthly Meeting. The couple and the Clearness Committee meet for thoughtful and prayerful discussions to seek God’s will. The committee or the couple may present specific queries or topics to give direction to the process. Clearness may arise out of worship. Those participating in the clearness process endeavor to approach each meeting with open hearts and minds, allowing sufficient time for understanding and seasoning to occur. One of the Clearness Committee’s responsibilities is to make sure, insofar as is

possible, that there is nothing to interfere with the permanence and happiness of the proposed marriage or commitment. If either party has children, it is also appropriate for the Clearness Committee to ascertain that their emotional and legal rights are being considered. To help with the clearness process, the couple works with the Clearness Committee on the wording of the Certificate, including the vows. The couple should understand that they would probably meet with their Clearness Committee more than one time.

When the couple and the Clearness Committee are clear that the ceremony should go forward, the Committee reports its endorsement to the Monthly Meeting. They indicate that unity has been found and recommend that the Monthly Meeting take the relationship under the care of the Meeting.

It may be that unity to move forward is not found by the couple and the Committee. They may choose to continue seeking God's will in this matter, or they may choose to lay aside the request indefinitely or permanently. When the right course of action is clear, the Clearness Committee reports this to the Monthly Meeting.

The Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business receives the Clearness Committee's report and, after prayerful consideration, minutes its action. Thoroughness in the clearness and guidance process is essential in seasoning the relationship and in establishing a strong basis on which to begin this lifetime journey.

Topics Suggested for Discussion During the Clearness Process

Most of these subjects will arise naturally in the course of the interviews, and it is preferable that the prospective partners feel free to broach them themselves. It is well for the committee to have topics in mind and to see that they are covered. The aim of the Clearness Committee is to elicit responses so that each member of the couple hears the answers of the other. There are not specific answers necessary to the committee. The committee makes available to the couple relevant books and pamphlets on marriage or ceremonies of commitment, and informs the couple of other Quaker resources.

- *Communication.* Do they understand that communication, verbal and non-verbal, is fundamental to a relationship? Have they discussed the patterns of communication they now have? Are they beginning to learn each other's style? How are uneasy feelings shared? How do they express their strongly felt concerns? How do they get what they want and cope when they do not get what they want? How do they express their love and respect for each other? How do they understand/receive the other's expressions of love, fear, passion, etc.? How do they know when they have been heard? How do they identify and resolve conflicts? In relating to each other will they, in the words of John Woolman, let "love be the first motion" in their relationship?
- *Background and Acquaintance.* What brought them to decide upon this step? What benefits are they seeking? How well does the couple know each other? Do they share similar views regarding the Friends' testimonies of equality, integrity, peace, simplicity and community? What are their basic common values? How do they adapt to differences in background, religion, temperament and interests? Can they meet their differences with love, humor, mutual respect, patience, and generosity? Do they envision building a new family? What does this mean to them?

- *Religious Beliefs, Feelings, Aspirations.* Do they see their commitment as a spiritual relationship to be entered into with appreciation of its Divine basis? How do they propose to meet their religious needs as a couple? How do they plan to make their relationship accessible to Divine assistance? Do they endeavor to hold each other in the Light?
- *Growth and fulfillment.* Do they think of themselves as trusted and equal lifelong partners, sharing responsibilities and decisions? Are they supportive of each other's goals for personal growth and fulfillment? Do they communicate their feelings and needs, their dreams and fears to each other? Are they able to discuss their sexual expectations openly? Do they have the courage and the willingness to go together for outside guidance from family, Meeting, wider community or professional?
- *Children.* Have they shared and found unity on whether they expect to raise a family? Have they discussed family planning or adoption? Do they see a child as a gift from God? If they plan to have children, do they both accept the responsibilities of raising children, including time, finances, education, and religious training? Are they aware of differences in the way each was raised and how each understands parenting? How do they expect they will resolve these differences? Have they discussed communicating with children, and disciplining them? What experiences have they had in caring for children and sharing in their upbringing? Are they ready to listen to each child and to support the unfolding of the child's gifts and true nature? In relating to their children will they, in the words of John Woolman, let "love be the first motion" in that relationship with each child? Will they listen to each child? What are their feelings about the place of children in the life of the family, the Meeting and the wider community? Has the couple considered the special concerns that may arise regarding a family headed by a same sex, mixed race or mixed cultural origins couple?
- *Daily Living.* Have they explored their sense of the Queries and Advices? Have they given consideration to, and found ways to resolve anger when it arises within the relationship? Have they discussed and worked through questions regarding the earning, use and management of money? Have they considered how to resolve daily issues such as household care and personal schedules, etc.? Have they found ways to resolve life-style issues, such as one being a morning person and the other being an evening person? Have they explored attitudes towards holidays and gift giving? Have they discussed the legal names each will use?
- *Relationships with Others.* Are they aware of the need for developing a variety of other friendships that contribute both to individual growth and to their relationship? Do they share views on faithfulness? How do they view their relationships with each other's families and friends and their obligations toward society?
- *Relationship with Monthly Meeting.* What does the couple expect the Monthly Meeting to do to support their relationship? What do they expect their relationship to bring to the Monthly Meeting? Does the couple intend this to be a legal, as well as a religious, marriage commitment?
- *Outside Obligations.* Has the couple considered how existing commitments, personal or financial, may affect the union? Are they fully aware of each other's personal and financial

position and obligations? Have they explored their commitments to work and discussed how they plan to balance the demands of career, family and Quaker service?

- *Attitude of Families.* What are the views of their families toward the prospective marriage or commitment and to the new partner? What is each partner's attitude toward his or her partner's family?
- *Legal Concerns.* If there is no marriage license, has the couple investigated all aspects of this situation both for themselves and their children that the ceremony will not address especially when the ceremony is not recognized by the state?
- *The Vows and the Certificate.* A responsibility of the Clearness Committee is assisting the couple with the wording of their vows and their certificate. With the approval of the Clearness Committee, the wording of the vows and the certificate may be changed to conform to the wishes of the participants. Older certificates included the parents' addresses, consent of surviving parents, etc. At least one certificate included a section: "We, the children, recognizing our parents' affection for each other and for us, individually and as a family, have signed our names, knowing we shall be beloved forever."

Suggested Vows

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

Or

In the presence of God, and before these our Friends, I commit myself to thee, _____, promising, with Divine assistance, to be unto thee loving and faithful, as long as we both shall live.

A Sample Certificate

Whereas _____ of _____, and _____ of _____, having declared their intentions of marriage (commitment) with each other to _____ Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends held at _____, their proposed union was allowed by that Meeting.

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 _____ and _____, appeared in a meeting for worship of the Religious Society of Friends held at _____. And taking each other by the hands did declare, each speaking in turn, that they with Divine assistance would be unto each other loving and faithful as long as they both should live. [or words to that effect] And moreover they, _____ and _____, did, as further confirmation thereof, then and there to this certificate set their hands.

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

etc.

- *The Celebration.* How do they view the Meeting for Worship on the occasion of marriage or celebration, which is to take place under the care of the Meeting? Are they familiar with the procedure? Do they appreciate the values involved in the Quaker form of commitment? Do they understand that all arrangements, including invitations, need to wait until after the Meeting has agreed to the marriage commitment under the care of the Meeting?

Marriages and committed relationships pass through many phases, and through all phases the quality of the relationship is tested. The development of a relationship is a growing experience. Respect for each other and enduring, loving expression deepen the bond. With God’s help, each couple finds a true path and a way of living that leads to a stronger union. Yet, whatever the style of life, all relationships need a foundation of commitment, communication, honesty, and integrity. Patience, humor and a spirit of adventure, guided by a mutual trust in God’s presence, strengthen the present and brighten the hope for the future.

Adapted from Pacific Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice
By North Pacific Yearly Meeting, Faith and Practice 1993

Arrangements Committee

When the Monthly Meeting has minuted its approval, it appoints an Arrangements Committee after consulting with the couple. The Arrangements Committee and the couple come to an agreement on the time and place of the ceremony. The committee works with the couple to design their ceremony. All Quaker marriage or commitment vows take place in a Meeting for Worship in an atmosphere of simplicity, dignity and reverence. Southeastern Yearly Meeting is blessed with memberships representing a wide range of Quaker practice. In addition to the traditional exchange of vows and signing of the certificate, we experience a variety of procedures within our Monthly Meetings.

It is the responsibility of the couple to produce their certificate using the wording previously approved by their Clearness Committee. A pre-printed certificate may be ordered from the Friends General Conference Bookstore. If appropriate, they inform themselves of the legal requirements of the state in which the marriage is to take place and obtain the license. See Florida Statutes #741.04; or the

appropriate Georgia Statutes or South Carolina Statutes. They rehearse their vows as approved by their Clearness Committee and organize their reception.

It is the responsibility of the Arrangements Committee to explore options with the couple and to assist in making appropriate decisions. Tradition dictates a worshipful atmosphere, the couple saying their vows to each other without a third party officiating, the reading of the certificate and the signing of it by all present. Some aspects of the ceremony that need to be decided include:

- ◆ When the couple enters and exits and where they sit,
- ◆ General seating arrangement,
- ◆ How to let people know what to expect and how to understand a Quaker Wedding. A brief printed explanation can be obtained from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, which can be included in wedding invitations or made available at the door. A designated Friend may give an explanation after the guests and wedding party are seated.
- ◆ Timing of the exchange of vows. Vows should be exchanged after the meeting has settled and early enough to allow for vocal ministry from worship.
- ◆ Whether or not the couple wishes to be seated to sign the certificate, or remain standing and walk to the certificate table to sign. If they wish to be seated two people must be ready to bring the table to them.
- ◆ Who reads the certificate,
- ◆ Who closes meeting,
- ◆ Who facilitates the signing of the certificate by those present. If desired, the number and placement of spaces to be saved for signatures of the family, the Arrangements Committee members, and/or members of the Committee for Care of the Marriage may be prearranged.
- ◆ The appropriateness of any prearranged participation, e.g. music, readings, etc.

The committee may also offer to help with the planning of the reception. The couple is responsible for the reception unless other arrangements are made.

The Arrangements Committee is responsible for ensuring that all legal documents are properly completed, signed by the Clerk of the Monthly Meeting and any other legally required person, and filed with the county clerk or designated officer within the time required by law. The committee is responsible for recording the certificate with the Monthly Meeting Recorder. In addition, they report to the following Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business that the ceremony has been carried out in good order and that all legal requirements have been satisfied. The committee also reports, if appropriate, that the certificate has been properly recorded and reports the names assumed by the couple.

Traditional Friends Ceremony

The ceremony itself takes place in a Meeting for Worship. Guests gather in silence at the appointed time in an atmosphere of quiet and reverence. The couple and their attendants, if any, enter and usually sit facing the gathering of friends and relatives.

Following a period of worship, the couple rises, takes each other by the hand, and, each speaking in turn, makes the promises given in the Certificate. The promises of the couple are made to one another without the help of a third person. Thereafter, the couple signs the certificate. It is read aloud by a designated Friend.

Worship continues, often with rich vocal ministry, and is closed in the usual manner of the Meeting for Worship. Afterward, everyone present signs the certificate.

Meeting's Care for the Relationship

Friends are reminded that the Meeting's nurture and care of the relationship does not end with the celebration but endures throughout the whole of life. Each couple must be aware that their committed relationship has far-reaching effects on others. They need to be willing to seek Divine help and Meeting guidance to assist in fulfilling the vows. In taking the couple under their care, the Meeting assumes the responsibility to be steadfast and direct, as well as sensitive, in fulfilling its obligation. At the time of the marriage, a Committee for the Continuing Care of the Marriage is appointed. Often, the members of the Arrangements Committee serve in this capacity.

Meetings have an important role in nurturing, supporting and celebrating the couples under their care. In a loving community of persons of similar religious values and priorities, couples can be sustained and guided in their efforts to build an enduring relationship. Care of the relationships among the members of the Meeting is nurtured by celebrations, workshops, and supportive discussion groups, as well as by Meetings for Worship and Meetings for Business. This may enhance the life of the Meeting.

Some couples may appreciate the feeling of caring that the Meeting offers when times are easy, but fail to invite its guidance during difficult times. Loving concern is helpful here. As members of the meeting community deepen their friendships, one may become sensitive to the pain another is bearing. A child, another family member, or the person may communicate verbally or in some nonverbal way such as behavior changes. Workshops on marriage and child rearing are particularly helpful in this context. The Meeting and the individuals in the Meeting assist each other through prayer and a strong belief in Divine intercession in daily life. We are a community that serves God, and therefore each other. For example, one Monthly Meeting has had a Meeting for Worship for Renewal of Vows. Another has had a Meeting for Worship to Recognize a Divorce. Friends remain open to support members' relationships.

Marriage or Ceremonies of Commitment Outside the Care of the Meeting

If a member is married or celebrates a commitment outside the care of the Meeting, the Monthly Meeting may arrange a committee to visit with the new couple, expressing the interest of the Meeting in their new relationship. No matter how the marriage or commitment was accomplished, all couples receive the loving support and care of the Meeting.

Remarriage

A new marriage or committed relationship takes much faith, strength and courage following the loss of a partner. The processes of request, clearness, and support of the new relationship are identical to those just outlined. During the clearness process, however, special consideration will naturally be given to discussion pertinent to the changed circumstances.

Where children or other relatives are involved, it is advisable for the clearness process to include discussions with them. A new relationship often involves the creation of a blended family. The

Clearness Committee can be helpful in resolving feelings about the new family structure by involving all parties in thorough and prayerful examination of feelings and expectations.

A common spiritual outlook, the continuing endeavor to hold others in the Light, and the awareness that love deepens and matures with time contribute to a stable relationship. The couple is encouraged in resolving and healing their respective pasts, as they look to make a common future together.

Separation and Deciding to Divorce

“We would counsel Friends to take timely advice in periods of difficulty. The early sharing of problems with sympathetic Friends or marriage counselors can often bring release from misunderstandings and give positive help towards new joy together. Friends ought to be able to do this, but much will depend on the quality of our life together in the Society. ... We need to be more sensitive to each other’s needs, knowing one another in the things which are material as in the things which are eternal.”

— Marriage and Parenthood Committee, 1956
Faith & Practice, London (Britain) Yearly Meeting, 1972

In spite of the best intentions, wisdom may dictate a separation or divorce. Should this become evident within the Meeting community, counseling may be recommended. When dissatisfaction first arises, the couple is encouraged to prayerfully discuss those differences that have arisen. Should discontent continue and outside counseling is recommended, either may request a clearness committee or seek counseling with a professional counselor whom both respect and trust and with whom each feels comfortable. Through counseling, many issues can be resolved, and the union may then remain intact. It is important to express the Meeting’s love and concern to the couple and the children, if any, in all considerations.

If the relationship evolves into a destructive one, either emotionally or physically, the Meeting continues to reach out to support each member of the family in seeking a solution beneficial to all. A destructive relationship may require separation and ultimately a divorce. In the event of separation or divorce, both persons are encouraged to consider each other as beloved children of God.

Friends often have not dealt well with the issues of separation or divorce. Ignoring a painful situation does not diminish its impact, but does isolate the people involved. When Friends commence to acknowledge that differences have evolved, the couple may be helped to come to clarity, avoiding a bitterness that can be injurious to each and to any children of the union, as well as to other family members.

Divorce cannot be undertaken lightly. “Laboring” is an appropriate Quaker term for the amount of energy that must be expended within the union and within the Quaker community. Parents and the Meeting need to remember and provide for the children’s needs as well as the adults’. The children usually need to maintain their relationship with both parents though circumstances may dictate otherwise.

The pain and suffering of a person going through divorce can become overwhelming for the individual and the Meeting. Friends need to acknowledge their own limitations and energy commitments. Recommending professional counseling to deal with emotional issues allows the Meeting to deal with the spiritual ones.

When two members face separation or divorce, one or both may feel alienated from further participation in the Meeting. If the Meeting has taken an active and even-handed role in the clearness process before the separation or divorce, the sense of alienation may be lessened and separation may proceed with tenderness and charity.

Divorce

A couple that is having a troubled relationship and decides on divorce may want the Meeting to witness the divorce. This may be especially true for same-sex couples that do not go through legal divorce proceedings and so do not have a formal closure of the relationship.

The Meeting could provide a Clearness Committee for the couple and the Meeting to get clear on the divorce.

Following much soul searching and time required for separation, some divorcing individuals are requesting a Meeting for Worship to recognize their changed status. During the Meeting for Worship each person, in the presence of God, releases the other from his/her vows and wishes the other well on his/her life journey. Whether privately or publicly held, this can be a healing moment for one or both parties, and children, if any, and for their Meeting.

Be kind and courteous towards one another, learning how to be quiet, how to excel in virtue and purity in everything you say and do so that your whole lives may be devoted to what is sacred and right, in a way that is fitting for saints and Christians. Let everyone, in humility, reckon others more advanced in the truth than they are, for 'the one who inhabits eternity... lives with a humble heart' (Isaiah 57:15). And therefore, do not stifle the least prompting of God's good spirit in yourselves, or in others, but value truth and goodness, and let truth itself subdue all harshness and bitterness and abuse, so that truth can find its way through the lives of every one of you. And it will enable you to bear with one another's faults and weaknesses.... So be passionate and faithful in the cause of truth, but also careful and cautious, and be known for your consideration of others, your moderation and restraint. Let it be clear that it is the Lord who works through you, and let honesty and justice be evident in everything you say and in every interaction with other people. Leave no debt outstanding, but remember the debt of love you owe to others. Then each of you will be clothed in a humble and quiet spirit, which the Lord values greatly.

— George Fox, Epistle 1680

"We thank God then, for the pleasures, joys and triumphs of [life together]; for the cups of tea we bring each other, and the seedlings in the garden frame; for the domestic drama of meetings and partings, sickness and recovery; for the grace of occasional extravagance, flowers on birthdays and unexpected presents; for talk at evenings of the events of the day; for the ecstasy of caresses; for gay mockery at each other's follies; for the plans and projects, fun and struggle; praying that we may neither neglect nor undervalue these things, nor be tempted to think of them as self-contained and self-sufficient."

— Faith and Practice, London (Britain) Yearly Meeting, 1960