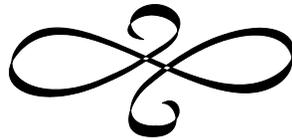


# Oversight of Marriage

## Davidson Friends Meeting



Davidson Friends Meeting welcomes the oversight of the marriage of its members and attenders to whom our spiritual tradition, as an unprogrammed meeting, is meaningful. We believe that marriage is a religious covenant calling two people into a lifelong and mutually exclusive relationship. The individuals attempt to discern if they have been called to join in this relationship, while the Meeting attempts to discern whether to take the relationship under its care. The couple needs also to be open to the Meeting to care for the marriage.

### **To Request a Marriage Under the Care of the Meeting:**

- At least one member of the couple must have attended Davidson Friends Meeting regularly for six months
- Submit a letter of request for marriage under the care of the Davidson Friends Meeting to the clerk of the Meeting; and
- Both members of the couple will meet with a Clearness Committee appointed by Ministry and Council

### **The Clearness Committee for Marriage**

Marriage under the care of our meeting requires “double clarity” (Jan Hoffman). The couple must be clear that they are called to a covenant relationship with each other. The meeting must be clear that it can take this marriage, including the whole relationship, under its care. The role of the clearness committee is to support the couple and the meeting in discerning the double clarity.

Who should be on the clearness committee?

1. People with the ability to listen well and feedback without adding an opinion.
2. One person with previous experience on clearness committees.
3. One to two people who know both individuals well.
4. One person who is not a close friend and who can ask the hard questions.
5. One person who is a member of the meeting.

The committee should have three to five members. All committee members should have the time and energy needed to test a call to marriage. This can require multiple meetings with the couple, without the couple, with each of the individuals separately. The process could take several

months. All on the committee should be able to hold the process in confidence. The Clearness Committee will work with the couple to be knowledgeable of applicable laws.

Possible Outcomes --

The Clearness Committee recommends to the meeting that it take the relationship, including the marriage, under its care.

The clearness process helps the couple find themselves not clear to proceed.

The Clearness Committee recommends that the meeting not take the relationship, including the marriage, under its care. In doing so, the committee allows time for the couple to season the leading.

The Clearness Committee recommends that the meeting not take the marriage under its care, but extends the help of the meeting in planning a wedding in the manner of Friends.

### **Questions for Clearness on Marriage**

The Davidson Friends Meeting feels these questions should be discussed by the couple. Therefore, it will use the questions as a basis for its meeting with the couple prior to its report to the Meeting. We hope you will consider these questions in the loving concern with which they are put forth.

QUESTIONS FOR EACH PERSON TO ANSWER FOR HIM-OR HERSELF:

- What am I looking for in a marriage partner?
  - Does this person fit that description?
  - What do I assume are some of my roles in marriage?
  - What do I assume will be some of the roles of my spouse?
- (Please list roles and compare notes with betrothed later.)

- Am I ready to accept change in myself and my mate and build on these changes?
- How do I feel about discussing my sexual needs and desires with my mate?

QUESTIONS FOR THE COUPLE TO DISCUSS WITH EACH OTHER:

- Do we know each others' habits, likes and dislikes?
- Are we ready to make adjustments in our living and to meet these with kindness and understanding?
- Do we know each others' opinions on questions important to us, i.e. neatness vs. casualness, attitudes toward punctuality, social time spent together vs. social time spent in groups?
- If either or both of us have been married before, have we discussed our relationship and responsibilities to former mates and/or children?
- Do we want children? What is our attitude toward planned parenthood? adoption?
- How do we feel about the use of leisure time? Do we have similar interests which can be shared and enjoyed together?
- How do we feel about each others' private time?
- How will we attempt to ensure the happiness of our marriage against disagreement over the use of money?
- Do we share each others' attitudes on earning, spending and saving money?
- Have we considered the financial implications of childbearing or serious illness on the income of the family?
- Have we considered and made each other aware of where we are in our spiritual search for religious convictions and ethical principles?
- Have we considered how our spiritual lives may be shared? Or, have we discussed how our lives may be planned so that differing religious convictions will not compromise the harmony of our marriage?

- How do we react to each others' parents, friends and relatives?
- What do we feel is the significance of being married?
- How will it change our relationship?
- Have we considered discussing our marriage with other people such as recently married friends or older friends?

*[These questions were adapted from Willistown Meeting Questions on Clearness for Marriage]*

### **Advices & Quotations**

Since God is the author of love, no couple can without God make good their promise to love one another for the rest of their lives. . . Love must inevitably change and mature, and every relationship has its times of stress as well as its times of renewal. But there are periods in some married lives when all that can be done is to go on trying to love and to continue to believe in the elusive and unique quality for which we gave ourselves to our partner until death should us part. . .

What a triumph when old love is transformed into deeper, surer new love which can accept more fully what each had, and the pair find a rebirth together in those things which are eternal, and through this a renewal of their everyday living.

*London Yearly Meeting, 1959*

We are called to obedient love  
 even though we may not  
 be feeling very loving.  
 Often it is through  
 the performance of loving acts  
 that loving feelings can be built up in us.  
 We may start with small  
 perhaps very tiny steps.

*Sandra Cronk, 1983*

Two young trees are planted close together  
 in common soil at marriage.  
 They send down their roots together,  
 and feed on many of the same nutrients.  
 But as they grow taller and older  
 some of the roots shoot out in different directions,  
 away from each other, seeking mutually alien soil.  
 Nevertheless, the older original roots stay intertwined.  
 The trees also grow above ground.  
 Many of their branches intertwine and  
 shape each other in the happy embrace of shared space...  
 But these trees are not only growing toward each other;  
 they are growing in all directions.  
 Like the roots, some of the branches  
 stretch far away from the common center,  
 and breathe a mutually alien air.  
 Each tree is in itself whole and individual  
 and growing according to its inner design  
 yet shaped on the one side by its partner,  
 and on the other by the outside world.

*Elise Boulding, 1989*

We wish those getting married a lifetime of happiness together, but few lives are full of joy. Sorrow and pain come to all of us. Problems can divide us, or we can grow together through them. Facing economic reverses, disasters, serious illness, and death honestly and supportively can strengthen a relationship. Much of life consists, however, of going on day after day, without making much visible progress, doing our work as faithfully as we can, with no special reward or recognition. Our mate's understanding of the need for encouragement, of a break—sometimes in the form of a special treat or gift or night out—can make an enormous difference. If, however, we expect our mates to support us in idleness or carry a disproportionate share of the load or

smooth out all our difficulties and shield us from disaster, we are doomed to disappointment. No marriage can grow into wholeness unless both work at it with mutual forbearance and trust and caring.

*Elizabeth Watson, 1981*

In the true marriage relationship  
the independence of husband and wife is equal,  
their dependence mutual,  
and their obligations reciprocal.

*Lucretia Mott 1850*

There always seems to be enough love to deal with even the most enormous hurt or conflict between us. We have tested this reluctantly, unintentionally, and found to our great relief, that life apart is out of the question. The question is always—what are we going to do with this obstacle? And, like all other traumas, if we can use it for learning, then we can turn pain into wisdom. But it means doing the homework—teaching, changing and going to new ground with maps. Sometimes I wonder if this is why so many marriages fail. Where in life do we have any preparation to be shown our worst selves by someone who loves us and understand it as a gift to become better at being who we are?

*John Calvi, 1997*

One couple, recently married . . . . stated the fundamental shift for which they had been waiting. Both relinquished the question of whether the other was the perfect partner for them. They took up instead the question of whether each was willing to get up each morning for the rest of their lives and try again with the other.

*Patricia Loring, 1999*

### **Resources –**

The couple and the Clearness Committee members should have resources about the clearness process and marriage under the care of a meeting made available to them. Some suggestions include:

McBee, Patricia. Use of Clearness Committees in Pastoral Care. Pastoral Care Newsletter, Vol. 7, No. 4, June 2000. Also in Grounded in God, Care and Nurturing in Friends Meeting, edited by Patricia McBee, Philadelphia, PA, Quaker Press, 2002.

Hoffman, Jan. Clearness Committees for Marriage or Commitment. Pastoral Care Newsletter, Vol. 2, No. 4, May 1995. Also in Grounded in God, Care and Nurturing in Friends Meeting, edited by Patricia McBee, Philadelphia, PA, Quaker Press, 2002.

Watson, Elizabeth. Marriage in the Light: Reflections on Commitment and the Clearness Process. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Family Relations Committee, 1993

Adopted October 30, 2005