

**Proposed Minute on Same Sex Marriage
Sandy Spring Friends Meeting
April, 2011**

The Sandy Spring Monthly Meeting (SSMM) of the Religious Society of Friends regards marriage as religious in nature, a covenant made in the presence of God with family and Friends witnessing and promising support. Two years ago, in the spring of 2009, the Marriage and Family Relations (MFR) Committee raised the question whether our procedures for marriage under the care of SSMM were available to all couples, regardless of sex or gender.

After a period of extended reflection and prayer, our committee reached unity that our procedures for marriage under the care should be available to all couples. The process of discernment continued. The MFR Committee presented the query to Ministry and Counsel and Membership and Spiritual Care Committees. With their blessing, we brought the query to the Meeting community through silent announcements, opportunities to talk with Committee members during coffee hour, and conducted two listening sessions in June and October, 2010.

Throughout our process of discernment and listening, Friends affirmed that the basis of a committed relationship and marriage is Love. They affirmed that the Meeting takes a couple's marriage under our care by discerning the presence of Love and God in the relationship, and by our willingness and ability to support the relationship. We do this by calling on Divine guidance. Most Friends joined in our desire to apply this discernment process with all Friends, regardless of sex or gender, who are called to a covenant of marriage "before God and these our Friends". Friends also affirmed the desire to speak and act in Love with others who may not be in full unity with this discernment.

The sense of the meeting from this discernment has led us to propose the following minute to the Meeting for Worship with a concern for Business:

Friends regard marriage as religious in nature, being a solemn covenant made between two people in the presence of God. We apply the Procedure for Marriage under the care of Sandy Spring Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends to all couples, regardless of sex or gender.