

# FRIENDS MEETING AT CAMBRIDGE

5 LONGFELLOW PARK  
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138  
TELEPHONE (617) 876-6883

Friends Meeting at Cambridge affirms that relationships between persons of the same sex can be as committed and holy as the heterosexual relationship that Friends have called marriage can be. Friends intend to give the same loving care and consideration to both same-sex and heterosexual relationships. We therefore welcome the opportunity to celebrate God's love made manifest in the love of a couple at a Meeting for Worship appointed to celebrate their union, according to the good order of Friends, whether the couple is of the same or different sex. We are not yet clear whether same-sex unions should have a different name than heterosexual unions.

minute approved on the eleventh day of Second Month, 1990

Friends Meeting at Cambridge approved the use of the word marriage in relationships of loving committed adult couples who have been found clear for marriage, and who desire to use the term.

minute approved on the eighth day of Ninth Month, 1994

# **Friends Meeting at Cambridge**

## **Legal and Practical Aspects of Committed Relationships**

### **A. Recommended Procedure For Couples**

Recommended procedure for couples who wish to be married under the care of Friends Meeting at Cambridge and do not obtain a state marriage license:

1. Same-sex couples or heterosexual couples who do not register with the state take the "Agreement for Committed Relationship Without a State Marriage License" to their lawyer who prepares contracts which conform to the provisions of the Agreement but are specific to the needs of the couple.
2. The couple signs the contracts prepared by the lawyer which must include but are not necessarily limited to the separation agreement, the parenting agreement, the financial relationship agreement, and the will.
3. The lawyer sends a letter to the Oversight Committee for Marriage which states the contracts have been signed in accordance with the Meeting's guidelines and lists the topics governed by the agreements.
4. The lawyer's letter is filed with the Meeting.

### **B. Agreement For Committed Relationship Without A State Marriage License**

The Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends at Cambridge wishes to establish prenuptial agreements which so far as possible will give those who do not wish, or are unable, to obtain a state marriage license, rights and responsibilities equivalent to those of spouses married under Massachusetts law.

These agreements are to be guided by the following principles:

1. The agreements will be the same regardless of the sexual orientation of the partners. That is, heterosexual and same-sex marriages are to be treated in the same way so far as these agreements are concerned, although it is recognized that heterosexual couples without a marriage license may eventually be considered married under Massachusetts law, which may raise difficulties.
2. So far as possible, the principle of equal sharing of rights and responsibilities shall be followed in drawing up agreements having to do with such matters as financial and parental obligations. Since Friends have a strong religious and historical tradition of treating men and women equally, agreements shall not make gender-specific assignment of rights and responsibilities, e.g. in such areas as who is primarily responsible for earning money or rearing children. This is not to preclude fair agreements as to financial support in event of separation or divorce.
3. Agreements are to be made under the guidance of these principles which are designed to fit the needs of a particular couple with advice of counsel. If couples wish to make exceptions to the principles guiding such agreements, they may bring them for approval to the Clearness Committee or the Committee on Oversight of their marriage.
4. Couples are strongly advised to reach agreements in all of the areas which follow for the reasons briefly given under each of them. However, in order to avoid excessive regulation, only some undertakings are necessary for a marriage to take place under the care of the Friends Meeting at Cambridge.

### **Necessary Agreements**

The general principle for placing undertakings in this category is that failure to complete them has the potential for producing harm to others, or for producing disputes which may be difficult to resolve. Consultation with expert legal counsel is recommended.

Couples shall provide evidence that they have met the state requirements as to medical, age, kinship and marital status applicable to heterosexual marriages under Massachusetts law. It is the responsibility of the Clearness Committee to ascertain that these requirements have been met.

Agreements are:

*Separation Agreement.* This makes it possible for a couple to get divorced and to record the divorce so that a partner can be cleared to marry again. It also settles the fact that all other agreements made continue in force after separation until they are changed by mutual agreement.

*Parenting Agreement.* If there is a child cared for by the couple at the time of the marriage or later, this settles that domestic partners have fair rights and responsibilities for rearing the child during the marriage and afterwards in case of divorce. This should include custody, maintenance, and child support. Without such an agreement, there would be no way to seek redress, for example, from a partner who abandoned the marriage and made no provision for child care.

*Financial Relationship Agreement.* This settles that the partners agree to share fairly in income received, in expenses and debts incurred, and in ownership of property with special attention to property brought to the marriage.

*Wills.* This settles the division of property upon the death of a partner.

### **Strongly Advised Agreements**

Simple prudence would suggest that couples retain expert counsel to execute the following:

*Trusts.* Protects wishes of deceased if family members are likely to contest the will.

*Durable Power of Attorney.* Gives domestic partner the right to make any financial decision.

*Health Care Proxy.* Allows domestic partner to make important medical decisions.

*Burial Instructions.* Gives domestic partner legal authority to make last arrangements, rather than next-of-kin.

### **Mutual Amendment**

All of the above, except the separation agreement, may be amended at a later date by a mutual agreement, in writing and duly notarized. It is expected that these agreements, including any mutual amendments, will be kept on file at the lawyer's office.

### **A Suggested Separation Agreement**

"In the event one or both of us, after prayerful consideration, wishes release from this marriage we agree that one or both of us will give written notice of the desire for a divorce to Friends Meeting at Cambridge, and that both of us will spend the next year seeking divine and human assistance to heal the relationship. If the relationship has not been healed at the end of a year, we agree we will both sign a statement that the marriage is at an end, and we will send this document to the Friends Meeting at Cambridge, which will duly record the divorce."

Explanation: The one year waiting period tracks with the usual state divorce-with-consent-law. During this time, the Meeting stands ready to appoint a Clearness Committee should either member request it.

It should be noted that heterosexual couples may find that they are presumed "legally" married by state law and that the "separation agreement" is not recognized as a legal divorce. Further, if same-sex marriages are eventually recognized by state law, a legal marriage may be legally implied, and the "separation agreement" may be ineffective.

AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE  
1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102

A STATEMENT BY THE AFSC BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
A CONCERN ABOUT SEXUAL AND GENDER IDENTITY

"Oh, people, what ....does the Lord require of you? To act justly,  
and to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8)

It is our experience that God calls us to lives of love and justice: to transform by example this world's ethic of domination. We know from our experience that loving action can accomplish our goals, that violence is not needed; we choose as our means the power of the Spirit - the power from within, rather than power over others. We call on our experience of the gift of the loving presence of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people in our midst as we develop this statement. We gratefully acknowledge that our continuing revelation on this subject, as summarized below, is informed, as is all work in AFSC, by men and women, adults and youth, Friends and others from many religious, faith and spiritual traditions and from straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender identities.

The experiences of our lives are testimony to the following leadings:

1. The judgmental, prescriptive sexual ethic many of us were taught to associate with Christianity is contrary to our experience of God's universal love. As Friends, we acknowledge the guidance of the Bible and we also believe in God's continuing revelation, both of which have given us a sexual ethic based on love and justice. Many Friends meetings have embraced this revelation and have found this ethic in keeping with God's plan for us as loving human beings.
2. We believe that sexuality is governed by the same New Testament ethic that guides every other conduct choice for faithful Christians. Responsibility, mutuality, love, justice, non-violence, non-domination, and non-exploitation characterize what Jesus called the "Kingdom of God." How will sexual expression of love be judged? "By their fruits you shall know them" (Mt 7:20) Does this relationship create an environment of love and justice? Does it further the creation of loving and sustaining community? Loving relationships stand on the Friends testimony of equality. As people of faith, we celebrate all loving relationships and decry those relationships based on the exploitation of the young, poor, and powerless of whatever gender, orientation, or age.
3. We find that claiming our full sexuality becomes a joyful act of obedience and trust in our Creator's wisdom. When we trust the expression of our sexual identity in a loving and just relationship, our reliance on and commitment to God's revealed leadings is deepened. Doing so compels a sincere and continual search for God's way in this most intimate and undefended arena of our lives. The resulting varieties of relationship and gender identity,

in their complex, responsible, rich and surprising range, are a continuing reminder that God's plan is beyond human understanding.

4) We believe that human sexual diversity is a gift from God to be celebrated. We believe that exploring our spirituality demands an exploration of our sexuality unconstrained by bigotry and hate. We are called to follow the leading of the spirit: to love each other and act responsibly. These truths lead us to stand in solidarity with all loving, non-exploitive sexual relationships. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness. There is no law against such things." (Gal. 5:22-23)

5) Therefore, we call on Friends and members of the AFSC organization to speak out against any attack on the civil and human rights of persons because of their sexuality or gender identity. We find that some religious rhetoric has been used to deny civil and human rights and, worse, used as justification by those filled with hate to commit violent and aggressive acts against those who only seek to love. We particularly deplore any attack on the civil rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons couched in religious terms or attributed to scriptures. These acts are contrary to our own experience of God. Our testimony against all forms of violence, which includes our testimony against war, also encompasses social and psychological violence. We are ashamed of and condemn hate filled speech and the rhetoric of violence especially when used in the name of Christ or by Christian groups. We believe that violence in deed or in word against anyone violates "that of God" in every person. We work to create a climate in the United States and the world in which such acts and words of hate will be recognized as violence and will not be tolerated.

6) Religious beliefs sometimes grow out of fear - fear of the unknown, fear of difference. If society reflects those fears, then legal and social institutions are formed which label, separate, subjugate, marginalize and make invisible those among us who are seen as different. When such fears restrict whom we love and how we love, a fundamental part of our being is denied. No one cultural/spiritual understanding of sexuality can accurately speak for all. No single faith tradition has the one "true" morality. Indeed, we believe that faith calls us to love each other, unconstrained by traditions that condemn difference. As people of faith, we believe that all of us are called to learn and practice a new Way. We are called to action, not silence. Our words and actions declare this new learning to each other - that love has come to replace fear.

Approved on November 7, 1999

# FRIENDS MEETING AT CAMBRIDGE

5 LONGFELLOW PARK  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138-4816  
TELEPHONE (617) 876-6883

May 12, 2000

Cambridge City Council  
795 Massachusetts Avenue  
Cambridge, MA 02139

Dear Friends:

It has come to the attention of Friends Meeting at Cambridge (Quakers) that efforts have been initiated to rescind current Cambridge city ordinances permitting domestic partners of city employees to receive the same benefits as spouses of city employees.

Of special concern to us is the fact that the persons undertaking this effort have publicly identified themselves as coming from the Christian religious community of Cambridge. They do not speak for us.

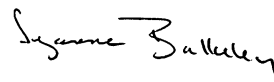
Friends Meeting at Cambridge wishes to affirm to the Cambridge City Council that our religious experience teaches us the value of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered friends among us.

Many in the religious community of Cambridge support the civil rights of g/l/b/t persons, and we hope that the Council will continue its current policy until same-sex marriages are recognized by the Commonwealth.

We enclose three supporting documents:

1. minutes on same sex marriage approved by Friends Meeting at Cambridge in 1990 and 1994
2. our legal and practical guide for couples in our meeting who marry without a state marriage license
3. a statement from the American Friends Service Committee that affirms and articulates the importance of the g/l/b/t friends in our midst.

Sincerely yours,



Suzanne Bulkeley  
Presiding Clerk

three enclosures

SSP/SB/sf

Consent Communication #5

1465

A communication was received from  
Susanne Bulkeley, Presiding Clerk,  
Friends Meeting at Cambridge, relative  
to Cambridge City Ordinance permitting  
domestic partners of city employees to  
received the same benefits as spouses  
of city employees.

S-146

In City Council June 5, 2000

**PLACED ON FILE**