

**A Discussion Guide  
for  
Draft Text on Marriage  
November, 2019**

Dear Friends,

New England Yearly Meeting is engaged in writing a Faith and Practice that reflects the yearly meeting as it is today, in a way that encourages spiritual renewal and fresh spiritual insight. The more the Faith and Practice Revision Committee hears from you, the more our new book of Faith and Practice will reflect the faith and practice of New England Friends. The committee needs to know if the draft texts encourage you and your meeting on your spiritual path. Does the text provide guidance for you to find the way forward together on difficult issues?

We appreciate feedback that reflects how the meeting as a community is responding to the text. Please highlight responses that are more widely shared in your group. A number of monthly meetings have taken the time to write minutes that reflected the sense of the meeting concerning the draft. We encourage more of this feedback from the meeting as a body.

Below are a series of queries on the various sections of the Marriage draft that may be helpful in guiding a discussion on the text. When you send in your responses to the text, please let us know how much of the text your group reviewed. Did you just review the paragraphs of descriptive text? Did you discuss the Extracts? Advices and Queries? Did you get as far as reviewing the Appendix?

You will notice that this draft on marriage says almost nothing about sexual relationships within marriage. At the moment, the committee is planning to address sexuality in the chapter The Family and Children. In that chapter we expect to write about the child's growing awareness of sex, puberty, gender identity, and sexuality from the teen years through to marriage, in marriage, and beyond marriage. Is this sufficient? Are there particular aspects of human sexuality that you feel need to be in the marriage chapter?

**QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCERNMENT**

1. Is the definition at the beginning of the chapter consistent with your experience of marriage (paragraphs 1-3)?
2. We are asking you to respond to whether the content of this text is helpful. While we cannot cover any topic in detail, we want to touch upon topics and ideas that are fruitful. Do the pieces on considering marriage, sustaining marriage, challenges in marriage, separation and divorce open a line of thinking that is helpful, either for you, a committee, or for someone in those stages of a marriage?
3. What is your experience of Friends marriages and procedures? Are there regular marriages within your meeting? Does this text enhance your understanding of the practical steps, and/or provide a handy reference?

4. Does the historical section give grounding to the procedures that follow in the sections about marriage today? Was any of this new to some of you?
5. Is the description for the religious basis of marriage clear? Is the concept of marrying each other without an intercessory significant? Are the vows of Friends marrying in your meeting including the words “with Divine assistance”? What piqued your interest in these concepts?
6. Extracts are chosen to give the range of Friends’ responses to their experience over time. Which extracts strike you as most interesting and thought-provoking? Are the extracts helpful – which ones? Are there others that you might suggest?
7. Are the advices and queries helpful to people in your meeting? What others could be considered?
8. What worked well for you in the chapter as written? Is there any part of the chapter that is unclear? What additions would be more helpful to meet your needs? Are there other issues around marriage with which your meeting has struggled that should be addressed? Are there insights and joys which might enhance the chapter?
9. The Appendices were originally drafted and shared with the YM in 2011. They were revised with input from monthly meetings in 2014 in preparation for the Interim F&P. Appendix 6 on marriage has been revised again now that we have written the text for the chapter. We are particularly seeking input from meetings on the second query in Appendix 6B:
  2. Are we seeking a spiritual union, a legal union, or both? If we cannot have or do not want a legally recognized union, are we aware of the many legal contracts which can be drawn up to provide rights similar to those that are part of a legally recognized union?

Is this query still useful? What is the experience of your meeting? Have you had occasions recently where couples, or the meeting, have struggle with this is question? What were the circumstances in that situation? How might this query be re-written to reflect your meeting’s experience today?

Please email your comments to [fandp@neym.org](mailto:fandp@neym.org) by February 1, 2020. Comments may be mailed to Phebe McCosker, clerk, PO Box 66, Thetford, VT 05074. The draft on Marriage and this Discussion Guide can be found and downloaded at the New England Yearly Meeting website on the *Faith and Practice* Revision Committee page <https://neym.org/texts-currently-under-discussion>. Paper copies may be requested from the NEYM office: 901 Pleasant Street, Worcester MA 06102-1908.