

Minute about Personal Ethics Standard in FUM Personnel Policy  
Revised Draft: FUM Minute 12/06/2015

Sandy Spring Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends minute regarding the personal ethics policy for Friends United Meeting Staff and Volunteers:

In December Of 2014 Colin Saxton, General Secretary of Friends United Meeting, came to Sandy Spring Monthly Meeting at our invitation to consider with us our concerns over the organization's personnel policy, which mandates that all staff and volunteers restrict their intimate sexual behavior to the relationship of monogamous heterosexual marriage.

As a Meeting, Sandy Spring Monthly Meeting is not in unity with FUM about this policy and our affiliation with FUM has seemed to us to require that we enter into conversation about it in a way that honors our own Meeting's leadings. This gathering represented our latest effort in the search.

We appreciate Colin Saxton's willingness to come together with us and engage about this issue in a spirit of helpfulness and concern, reviewing the historical background to the policy and listening to our concerns. In responding, Colin Saxton suggested that we minute our sense of the Meeting, and that further, we send our minute to Baltimore Yearly Meeting and to the FUM board for further reflection. Following months of discussion and seasoning we feel ready to do this.

Sandy Spring Meeting accepts and welcomes people into fellowship regardless of sexual orientation or marital status. Our only concern regarding these matters is that our intimate relationships be respectful, committed and loving. But our Meeting has come to this position only over time and after much reflection. Only through worshipping, discussing, sharing, celebrating, grieving, and living together in community have we come to appreciate and accept one another regardless of our differences. In particular, this is true of ways we differ from one another in sexual orientation.

It was only after long consideration that Sandy Spring Meeting found its way to affirm and celebrate partnerships of same-sex couples under our care through ceremonies of commitment. Even more recently, we have come to celebrate marriages of LGBT members under the care of the Meeting. As individuals, we still have a diversity of views about this as about other difficult issues. But as a Meeting, we feel the direction we have taken is consistent with Quaker values and has been led by the Spirit.

Our fellowship with one another has deepened and our understanding of the meaning of loving commitment has broadened. Our worshipping community flourishes and we feel blessed as a Meeting in all the diverse forms of personal commitments, marriages, families and single people in our care. As individuals and families, we feel blessed as our most intimate and committed relationships are affirmed and valued by our worshipping community.

Friends have a long history of belief in equal rights for everyone. In keeping with this tradition we wish to testify to the rights of all to live out freely and openly their differences in sexual orientation or gender identity.

We recognize that Friends place great importance on the Bible as testimony of God's presence and guidance in our lives as well as on our own direct experience of Divine leadings. It is our sense that all loving and respectful relationships are to be honored as expressions of Jesus' commandment that we love one another. We believe that our mutual acceptance and cherishing of the various forms of commitment to loving intimacy honors this commandment. It is our sense also that doing this is an expression of Friends' commitment to be bringers of peace. We hope others may come to share this conviction.