

From the Minutes of Lancaster Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends held at Lancaster, Pennsylvania on First Month 13, 2008, as published in the Meeting's Newsletter No. 241 for January 2008

### **Minute on Committed Relationships Under the Care of Lancaster Monthly Meeting**

Loving relationships undergird a peaceful society for all people and are an essential block in the foundation of the Religious Society of Friends. We believe that God's love is given to all. As God's love shines out from us, it strengthens all our relationships. We attest to the importance of one's individual search for God's will and to the importance of committed, loving relationships on life's path.

We of Lancaster Monthly Meeting support all committed relationships wherein is an enduring, unselfish and mutually devoted love between two people regardless of gender. We affirm our willingness to take such committed couples under the care of our Meeting. These committed relationships may have different names: most commonly marriage, but also union or covenant. Although not all committed relationships are presently recognized by the State, we hold all to be sacred commitments in the eyes of God, the couple, and our community. We will witness and celebrate such commitments for any couple in which one or both partners are members of our Meeting, with the recommendation of a Lancaster Monthly Meeting clearness committee and following the procedures outlined in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's Faith and Practice (1997).

Clerk asked if this minute speaks to the condition of our Meeting at this time?

Many Friends spoke in support of the minute. Several noted that the minute removes the distinction between gay and heterosexual relationship and includes all committed relationships. One Friend said that inclusion of the word "marriage" is important for people who have been denied use of that word. Another said that witnessing and celebrating a relationship is the easy part, it is the ongoing support that is difficult, and that we need to remember that we also support the ongoing process. Another Friend felt that this minute cannot be the end of our work, that our challenge is to ask ourselves the questions, how embracing we are of all of us? and what else needs to be done?

Clerk said it was the clerk's sense that we are in full unity. Meeting approved.