

North Pacific Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

Minute supporting Legal Recognition of Same-sex Marriage

Approved July 19, 1997

PREAMBLE

For many years, Friends have struggled with one another to grow in mutual understanding about issues relating to the lives of gays and lesbians within our Meetings, in our communities, and within our families. In our Meetings we include sexual minority members, some of whom are in same-sex marriages, and we have shared times with each other's families. We have found evidence, once again, of the truth to which Friends have witnessed throughout the years that there is that of God in every person.

We have struggled with the meaning of marriage. As Quakers, we recognize marriages to affirm the choice and commitment of individuals, to support loving families, and to strengthen our own spiritual community. We use the process of corporate spiritual discernment when deciding to take a marriage under our care. In recent years most of the Meetings in North Pacific Yearly Meeting (NPYM) have felt called to take the marriages of gay couples and lesbian couples under their care. Each of these Meetings made this decision after a corporate search under the guidance of the Spirit.

Marriage however is not only a religious, spiritual matter; it is also a legal or civil matter. Marriage in the civil sense conveys a broad array of civil benefits, including access to health insurance for dependents, tax benefits, inheritance rights, parental and custody rights, next-of-kin status for medical decisions and visitation. As we have educated ourselves about the lives and struggles of our sexual minority members, we have become aware of what effects the denial of these legal rights has on gay and lesbian couples. We now feel led to speak publicly against this form of discrimination and injustice and for the legal recognition of same-sex marriage.

We, therefore, approve the following minute:

North Pacific Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) is deeply concerned that access to civil marriage is presently denied to gay and lesbian couples. This injustice brings legal, financial and social discrimination against lesbian and gay couples and their children. We, therefore, support legal recognition of the marriages of gay and lesbian couples to permit them the same legal rights and responsibilities that pertain to heterosexual married couples.