

CHAPTER 9

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVICE UNDER CONCERN

9.1 The ministry of chaplaincy

A sense of call comes directly from the Holy Spirit. In the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), this is discerned, affirmed and supported by the worshipping community. In past years, Friends recorded those whose public ministry was found to be of spiritual help. Although it has been uncommon in recent years for Canadian Meetings to record ministers, this process is still in our discipline, and the process of recording Friends in the ministry of chaplaincy is based on this practice.

Chaplains are persons who are called to a professional ministry of pastoral and spiritual care in places such as prisons, penitentiaries, hospitals, schools, long-term care homes, psychiatric facilities, community centres, universities, the street, or elsewhere.

As volunteers, Friends have long offered spiritual care to those in institutions, arising originally from their own experience in the jails of seventeenth-century England. The work of Elizabeth Fry, Muriel Bishop, Ruth Morris, and Fred Franklin, among others, are examples of ministry to prisoners.

The call to a ministry of chaplaincy is a call to a

professional ministry with its attendant opportunities and responsibilities. Institutions expect chaplains to have appropriate training and to be recognized by their denomination; these expectations may vary from one institution to another.

A Friend called to a ministry of spiritual support with a concern to serve as a chaplain will usually need endorsement by the Yearly Meeting to fulfill this leading. Time to discern and minute this in the manner of Friends will be needed.

It is unlikely that a person recognized by Canadian Yearly Meeting as a Quaker chaplain will be employed in a position that uses this terminology, but will generally be employed by an institution as a Protestant or Ecumenical Chaplain, and be expected to offer spiritual and pastoral care to people with a wide range of religious backgrounds.

Reaffirming other aspects of our ministry in prisons, and the goal of restorative justice, we support the work of volunteers, the Alternatives to Violence Project, and the commitment of our minuted unity to abolish prisons and replace them with ... non-punitive, life-affirming and reconciling responses Prison abolition is both a process and a long-term goal. In the interim, there is a great need for Friends to reach out and support all those affected: guards, prisoners, victims and families. (CYM 1981 minute #93)

Canadian Yearly Meeting has established a standing body to oversee requests from Friends to be recognized as chaplains. This body consists of two Elders with a concern for chaplaincy.

Their duties are summarized in supporting documents for Organization and Procedure. Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Counsel names two Elders with a concern for chaplaincy, chosen from different geographical areas, with a

term of five years, renewable and staggered, so that one of the experienced Elders will always be available. Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Counsel has oversight of the Elders with a concern for chaplaincy. The Elders send copies of all reports to the Clerk of Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Counsel.

Friends are called to strongly and faithfully support those who have followed their leadings into this ministry to serve as Friends chaplains.

9.2 An overview of the process

A Friend who feels called to the ministry of chaplaincy should explore the call with close/seasoned Friends and, if encouraged, bring the call to the Monthly Meeting for business. The Monthly Meeting appoints a Clearness Committee and informs the Elders with a concern for chaplaincy that the process has been initiated.

The Monthly Meeting Clearness Committee meets with the called Friend, reaches clearness and reports to the Meeting for Business.

If the Monthly Meeting Clearness Committee recommends the called Friend as a chaplain and this is confirmed and minuted by the Meeting for Business, the Monthly Meeting notifies the Clerk of Canadian Yearly Meeting and the Elders with a concern for chaplaincy.

At this time, the Elders with a concern for chaplaincy appoint a Yearly Meeting Clearness Committee.

Depending on the time of year, the Clerk of Canadian Yearly Meeting informs the Yearly Meeting in session or the members of Representative Meeting, that the Friend has

requested a Yearly Meeting Clearness Committee for chaplaincy.

The Yearly Meeting Clearness Committee meets, both with and without the called Friend, and determines whether a Minute of Call should be recommended.

The Yearly Meeting Clearness Committee informs the Elders with a concern for chaplaincy of their recommendation. If a minute of call is recommended, the Elders report to the Yearly Meeting in session or Representative Meeting.

Yearly Meeting in session or Representative Meeting discerns its response to the Minute of Call to Chaplaincy for the called Friend.

The steps of this process, as approved by Canadian Yearly Meeting, are detailed in supporting documents of Organization and Procedure, which can be obtained from the Elders with a concern for chaplaincy.

CHAPTER 10

MARRIAGE

“For the right joining in marriage is the work of the Lord only, and not the priests or magistrates; for it is God’s ordinance and not Man’s; and therefore Friends cannot consent that they should join them together; for we marry none; it is the Lord’s work, and we are but witnesses.” [George Fox (1669)]

10.1 Friends’ view of marriage

Friends have always regarded marriage as a religious, not a mere civil compact. Those contemplating marriage are exhorted to seek Divine guidance in making their decision and throughout their subsequent married life. Attention is directed to *Christian Faith and Practice*, Extracts 272 and 481 to 510, where valuable guidance and counsel may be found.

Early Friends realized the importance of recording marriages which had taken place in Meetings for Worship and requested that the civil authorities recognize these marriages. They fervently maintained, however, that the right joining in marriage is the work of the Lord only; it could not be done by priest, magistrate, or other appointed person, nor is it the act simply of the parties themselves. Marriage is a solemn contract made in the presence of God.

From the very early days of the Society stress has been laid on the need for serious consideration prior to marriage, the clearness of the parties from all other engagements, the publicity given to the intention of marriage, and the value of

the Meeting for Worship in which the declarations are made by the parties in the presence of a number of fellow members of the Society.

Witnesses are required, partly to confirm that the declarations of marriage have been made by the parties, but principally to join with them in an act of worship. Thomas Ellwood, recalling his own marriage in 1669, wrote of the value of the Meeting for Worship: “We sensibly felt the Lord with us and joining us, the sense whereof remained with us all our lifetime, and was of good service and very comfortable to us on all occasions.”

The Society of Friends has established certain procedures for the conduct of a marriage to be solemnized in a Friends’ Meeting for Worship. This is partly to ensure that proper records are kept and that legal requirements are observed. Far more important, however, is the value of the procedure in emphasizing to those being married the solemn nature of their undertaking; to Monthly Meeting the need to uphold the parties concerned, both during the Meeting for Worship and after; and to all those concerned, their corporate responsibility for the Meeting for Worship to be rightly held.

In these times of social flux, many Friends are questioning marriage as we have traditionally understood it. In the search for new meanings and expressions of commitments, we may find that we have no clear guidance for couples. However, we reaffirm our testimony that a committed relationship should be entered into only under a sense of Divine leading, with due care to avoid impulsive decisions which later can lead to much hurt. We also reaffirm that marriage is a life-long, living process; it is a vocation and a commitment to be loving and nurturing of one another. The wedding celebration is one specific occasion within that lengthy relationship. Notwithstanding the ideal, we recognize that divorced persons are welcomed for marriage in a Friends’ Meeting.

A Meeting for Worship for the solemnization of a marriage is held in the same form and spirit as a Friends' Meeting for Worship at other times. It is an occasion when the parties to the marriage may gain inspiration and help from the Meeting, which may continue to be a source of strength to them during their married life. It is also an opportunity for those who attend the Meeting for Worship to ask God's blessing on the marriage and to support the parties to it in their prayers.

PROCEDURE

10.2 Summary

The persons wishing to be married in a Friends' Meeting for Worship must apply to the Monthly Meeting for the Meeting for Worship to be arranged. The Monthly Meeting must appoint a committee to visit with the parties, to ascertain that there are no obstacles to the proposed marriage and to ensure that both parties understand the nature of marriage as understood by Friends. If the committee reports that the way seems clear to proceed with the marriage and the Monthly Meeting approves, the Meeting for Worship is arranged. During the Meeting for Worship, both parties make their solemn promises. They sign the Certificate of Marriage either then or towards the close of the meeting. The certificate is then read to the whole Meeting by a person appointed for this task. At the end of the Meeting for Worship, usually, all present are invited to sign the certificate as witnesses.

Appropriate arrangements are made for notification of the civil authorities. Marriage will not be considered legal if a legal impediment exists.

10.3 Application to the Monthly Meeting

The persons who wish to have their marriage solemnized in a Friends' Meeting for Worship should write a letter to the Clerk of the Monthly Meeting stating their intention to be married and their desire that the Monthly Meeting have oversight of the wedding. This letter should be delivered if possible three months before the desired date of the wedding to allow for the necessary approvals and arrangements.

If either person is a member of a different Monthly Meeting, a similar letter must be written to her/his own Monthly Meeting explaining the intention to marry and naming the Monthly Meeting which has been asked to have oversight of the wedding.

If neither person is in membership, the letter of application should be accompanied by a written recommendation from an adult member of the Society. This adult member is expected to have discussed the application with the parties; should be satisfied that the applicants are in unity with Friends' testimony as to the nature of marriage and, if possible, have experience of our Meetings for Worship. He/she should not be a close relative of either party.

When a Monthly Meeting receives a letter of application for a marriage to be conducted under its care, it should appoint a clearness committee to meet with the two persons. It is suggested that two to four Friends be appointed. They should be familiar with our testimonies regarding marriage; close relatives of either party should be excluded from the committee. The committee should meet with the persons intending to marry. It should enquire to ascertain that there are no obstacles to the wedding, and ensure that both persons

understand Friends' beliefs regarding marriage. When the committee has met with the couple and has reached clearness on whether the marriage should be allowed, it should report its findings to the Monthly Meeting.

If the Monthly Meeting approves the conduct of the wedding, the same committee or a newly appointed committee of care will be responsible to advise the couple on procedure and to assist them with making the necessary arrangements.

When a Monthly Meeting receives a letter from a member advising that he/she wishes to marry under the care of another Monthly Meeting, a letter should be sent to the other Monthly Meeting certifying whether there is any known obstacle to the proposed marriage.

When a Monthly Meeting receives notice of intended marriage of one of its members or of an attender in its area, it shall arrange for a public notice of the intended marriage to be given at the close of the usual Meeting(s) for Worship of which the parties are members or which they attend. Any notice of objection should be delivered immediately to the Clerk of the Monthly Meeting in writing, who shall communicate it to the committee and to the parties without delay.

10.4 Advice to the marriage clearness committee

The committee is appointed by the Monthly Meeting which has been asked to have care of the marriage. It should meet with both parties if at all possible, both separately and together. The committee should enquire what understanding the persons have of Friends' beliefs regarding marriage. The committee should interpret and explain those beliefs as

necessary and give guidance for the couple's consideration.

The couple should be counselled on the form of a Friends' marriage. They should also be counselled prayerfully that marital bonds can be severely tried by unanticipated difficulties. God's help should be sought at all times. The couple should also be assured of the continuing care for them that will be felt by the Meeting, even (and especially) if they move to live somewhere else.

It is recommended that the committee also meet with the parents of both parties, where appropriate, to include them in the deliberations.

Consideration should be given to asking the couple to take a course in preparation for marriage. Such courses may be available locally.

Special care should be exercised in the following cases:

- where neither party attends Meeting for Worship regularly;
- where neither party is a member; or
- where either party has had a previous marriage dissolved.

10.5 Marriage arrangements committee

If the proposed marriage is approved by the Monthly Meeting, an appointed committee will advise and care for the couple in preparation for the ceremony. This committee, in consultation with the couple, will make arrangements to ensure that the wedding is accomplished with simplicity, dignity and reverence. All Friends should remember to show interest and give support for the couple during this time of preparation.

The committee is also responsible for advising the couple on the necessary formalities. This includes preparation of the Marriage Certificate, giving necessary public notice of the intended marriage, and the procedure for notifying the civil authorities of the marriage. If a couple applying for marriage under the care of a Meeting has an objection to complying with legal requirements, the Monthly Meeting must be clear that it is convinced of the depth of the couple's objections before approving the proposed commitment. Moreover, in that case, the Meeting should ensure that there is a marriage contract.

10.6 The Meeting for Marriage

Friends are affectionately advised to take care that the occasion of the wedding ceremony be characterized by the simplicity and dignity becoming a Meeting for Worship after the manner of Friends.

The Monthly Meeting is responsible for appointing a Friend to take care of the Friends' Marriage Certificate at the meeting for solemnization of the marriage. Before the meeting, the couple should deliver the Marriage Certificate to this Friend, ready for completion at the ceremony. This Friend must also be registered in advance with the authorities and he or she will be responsible for signing forms that record the marriage with the authorities.

The Monthly Meeting is recommended to appoint a sufficient number of suitable Friends to ensure that the Meeting for Worship is held in accordance with our practices. Where it is expected that many will be present who have no previous experience of Meeting for Worship, it may be desirable for a suitable Friend to explain briefly the nature of the Meeting for Worship and the procedure to be

followed.

During the Meeting for Worship, the Friends gathered will uphold the couple and through prayer, spoken ministry and silent intervals, and celebrate the love of God of which the couple and we are a part. As well as celebrating the commitment of two people to one another, a wedding is also a time to acknowledge the commitment of the couple to their Meeting community and vice versa. The couple and the Meeting will gain from the strength and stability engendered by a new relationship being created in their midst. At a suitable time in the Meeting for Worship, the couple stand and, taking each other by the hand, make their declarations.

Acceptable variations of the declaration of the vows (as suggested in the following Certificate of Marriage) can be found in books of Friends' discipline or modified somewhat to suit the couple. These declarations are made without the aid of any officiating minister. Since the union of two persons in marriage is an act of God, not of humans, it cannot be solemnized by any person appointed for that purpose.

If by reason of an impediment of speech or otherwise, either of the parties is unable to make the declaration distinctly, the Friend charged with the Marriage Certificate shall read the declaration audibly and the party shall indicate assent to its terms in some clear and unmistakable way.

The Friends' Marriage Certificate, which is designed in consultation with the couple, is to be signed towards the end of the worship service by the couple with whatever names they used before the marriage, using their full names. Later, it is to be read audibly by a suitable Friend. Those present who have heard the declaration may sign the Certificate after the conclusion of the Meeting. It is recommended that the

certificate be signed and read either immediately after the declarations have been made, or towards the close of the Meeting. The Certificate should be signed by at least two witnesses.

10.7 Certificate of marriage

One recommended form appears below.

Other suitable forms of certificate may be found in the various disciplines published by Friends' Meetings, or the couple may wish to compose their own certificate in keeping with the deep religious significance of marriage.

Certificates of Marriage, prepared by the couple in consultation with the marriage arrangements committee are a valuable record of the couple's new vocation and venture in the life of the Meeting.

AB of and CD of⁴ having declared their intention of marrying to the Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends held at and having complied with the marriage procedure of Canadian Yearly Meeting, the proposed marriage was approved by that Monthly Meeting.

This is to certify that AB and CD appeared this day of the month of the year in a Meeting for Worship of the Religious Society of Friends held at And AB taking CD by the hand ⁵ on this solemn occasion declared that he took her, CD, to be his wife; promising with Divine Assistance to be unto

⁴ Here insert parentage or other sufficient information.

⁵ The order of declarations in the meeting can be with either party speaking first. The order in the Certificate should reflect this.

register only such marriages carried out under the care of the Monthly Meeting.

If the couple maintains a conscientious objection to the completion of civil registration of their marriage, the Monthly Meeting must be clear that it is in unity with the couple's plans before proceeding with the worship ceremony of commitment.

10.9 Nurture of marriage

Ideally marriage is a life-long process; the preparations and celebration are only part of that lengthy relationship. Friends need to enrich their marriages continually and to support one another in many personal changes which are inevitable.

We advise Friends to review Chapter 10 of *Christian Faith and Practice* especially during times of stress for any of the families in the Meeting. When a couple first seeks clearness to marry, the possibilities of future difficulties, and approaches to solving them, should be considered. When conflicts arise, they may be met by seeking God's help, by patience, by mutual forbearance, by a sense of humour and proportion, and by a common will to create a true home. Friends should also be aware that others in the Meeting care for them, and can offer support and comfort in distress. Those in difficulty might also seek trained counselling. The guiding and healing power of God's love can be found acting through many channels if it is sought.

If a marriage runs into serious difficulties, we should cherish the spirit of understanding and forgiveness to which Christ calls us.

10.10 Separation and divorce

In each breakdown of marriage, the individuals or family members involved will have their own unique needs. General suggestions can be made, but it will be important for Friends in the Meeting to be sensitive, caring and spontaneous in their responses to those concerned. Meetings should recognize their limitations in providing help, and encourage those involved to seek trained counselling, while offering Friendly acceptance and reassurance that they remain valuable human beings. The primary focus will be on the support of each person and not just saving the relationship.

Those who are separating or divorcing may be conscious of pain and loss, and can experience overwhelming emotions of grief, uncertainty or loneliness. They may also feel freedom in release from a situation which they had found intolerable. There will be a need to search for spiritual strength and growth as changes occur in our lives.

Couples or individuals may request a committee of clearness, to be appointed by the Meeting of Ministry and Counsel in consultation with them, to assist in trying to reach agreement. Friends from outside the local Meeting may also be included. This may lead to reconciliation, or if separation is decided upon, the committee may assist in deciding on division of assets, arrangements for care and custody of children, and so on. It may be a real aid in providing a context wherein potentially embittered partners can communicate over essentials and start building a new way of relating to each other. Sufficient legal advice may be needed to ensure right ordering of the separation.

Although children will suffer with their separating parents, they may also be a source of joy and companionship. Parents should consider carefully how to explain the situation to their children, according to their level of understanding, without involving them in the dispute. It is

important for the Meeting to provide continuity of loving care for the children.

The first year is particularly difficult, and frequent short visits, telephone calls, or letters are most helpful. Friends should continue to welcome all persons involved as active members of the Meeting if they remain so, and encourage the family to continue attendance at the Meeting and contributions to its life. In a small Meeting it could happen that one partner feels uncomfortable attending when the other is present. The clearness committee may be able to help them work through the difficulty, so that the openness of meetings for all to attend becomes a reality for each of them again.

If a divorcing couple wishes to hold a Meeting for Worship at which their marriage is laid down, this may be done at the discretion of the Meeting of Ministry and Counsel. Sensitive ministry at such a meeting may be a comfort to the individuals and to others close to them who are distressed.

CHAPTER 11

BIRTH OR ADOPTION OF A CHILD

11.1 Birth and adoption

The birth or adoption of a child is a momentous event that needs recognition and support. There are several aspects that can be addressed by the Meeting. The Meeting family wishes to share the joy of the child's family, and there is a responsibility on the Meeting to provide spiritual support to the parents or parent in raising the child. This responsibility is even more necessary today when it is rare for parents to have the support of family members living nearby. As the child grows, the Meeting needs to do all possible to help the child feel a part of the Meeting, irrespective of whether the child has been brought into membership. Families fostering a child may also need the Meeting's support for the special responsibilities that are being taken on.

There is no widely recognized way in which a newly born or adopted child is welcomed into the worshipping community, but it is recommended that some form of welcoming be arranged. In some Meetings a Meeting for Worship is specifically called, similar to Meetings held to celebrate a marriage or the life of a departed Friend. Sometimes it is the custom for designated Friends to visit the family at home on behalf of the Meeting. In other cases an announcement is made at a regular First Day Meeting for Worship when the child is present for the first time. Often

this is followed by a shared meal or other social event to celebrate such a happy occasion.

It is recommended that Monthly Meetings minute the names of all children adopted by or born to members of the Meeting.

CHAPTER 12

DEATH, DYING AND CARE OF THE BEREAVED

Friends' approach to death is characteristic of our approach to life. We are seeking a way and truth made manifest in the life and death of Jesus Christ and of many others who have lived in that life and spirit. Friends are advised to prepare in advance for their own deaths and the deaths of those nearest them, spiritually, materially, and emotionally insofar as this is possible. These preparations will include the completion of wills and discussion of arrangements with family and executors.

Meetings can help in this process. They are advised to encourage members to make their basic decisions known and any special requests in connection with Memorial Meetings. A letter or form outlining these decisions should be kept on file by the Meeting. Friends are advised to make arrangements in advance with a funeral chapel or a local memorial society. Friends' perspectives on death are included in *Christian Faith and Practice* under "Death and Funerals", and in pamphlets such as *The Conduct of Quaker Funerals* (available from Quaker Book Service). We need each other's support to grow and develop in all phases of our life experience.

12.1 Memorial Meetings

The Memorial Meeting is a Meeting for Worship after the manner of Friends, taking into account any personal requests of the individual and the family. Of these Meetings, *Christian Faith and Practice* (paragraph 529) says:

“The funerals of Friends should be held in a spirit of quiet peace and trust. Natural sorrow there will be, especially for friends taken away in youth and in the strength of their days, but often our thought may be one of great thankfulness for lives which have borne witness to the upholding power of Christ.”

An attitude of thanksgiving to God for the life of the deceased is characteristic of Memorial Meetings for Friends.

As well as giving support, comfort and assurance to the family, Memorial Meetings can be a time of spiritual enrichment and blessing for the Meeting as a whole. Those who did not know the deceased can, by their presence, contribute to the support offered by the Meeting. Care should be taken to inform visitors who may not be familiar with Friends' manner of worship and to invite their participation. Near the beginning of the Meeting, it is helpful to have a brief statement read or written (or both) providing details of the person's life. The written statement may be a treasured memory for family and friends. Other Meetings for Worship may also be arranged for those who cannot attend because of time or distance.

12.2 Care for the dying and bereaved

Sensitive care is needed for the support of the dying and their families. The dying need to maintain a sense of dignity

and personal value. Remembrances in visits, thoughts, and prayer will give needed comfort and support. Friends may encourage the dying person to talk about her or his oncoming death and to share life experiences and faith.

At the time of death, Ministry and Counsel will inform others and arrange for a visit with the immediate family to offer loving support and to assist in preparations for the Memorial Meeting. At this time, special care should be made to minister to children who are part of the family. After the Memorial Meeting, Friends should remember to visit with the bereaved and to uphold them in prayer. The first year is particularly difficult, and frequent short visits, telephone calls or letters are most helpful. Many books have been written on this ministry and Friends are advised to consider the truth and wisdom they contain. The services of community counselling centres may be particularly helpful in this period of grief.

12.3 Records

The date of death should be recorded in the Monthly Meeting's minutes and in the Meeting's record book, along with birth, marriage, and membership records. If the person is a member of the Religious Society of Friends, a memorial statement entitled *Testimony to the Grace of God in the Life of AB* may be prepared and sent to the Secretary of the Yearly Meeting. Notice should also be sent to *The Canadian Friend* (periodical) so that other persons can be informed and assist in ministering to the bereaved.

12.4 Designation forms

Meetings are encouraged to provide forms for members

and attenders on which can be recorded each person's wishes insofar as mode of funeral, type of Memorial Meeting, disposal of the body, and concerns of the immediate family. These forms should be kept on file by the Meeting, or with Ministry and Counsel, to be consulted at the time of death.