

### 4.3.2 Planning a wedding or celebration of commitment

Amended in response to the feedback from Regional Meetings and at the Preparatory Session. Changes made as a result are shown **in purple font and highlighted**. The wording in the third column **in black font** has already been agreed by all RMs

Current text – edition 7	Proposed wording as in <i>Docs in Advance</i>	Amended wording after the Preparatory session
<p>Planning a wedding or celebration of commitment Quaker partners wishing to declare their mutual commitment during a special Meeting for Worship write to the appropriate Regional Meeting Clerk to ask that the Meeting agree to recognise the relationship, and agree to a time and a place for a special Meeting for Worship for this purpose.</p> <p>A marriage or commitment celebrated ‘in the care of the Meeting’ will be supported by that Meeting and its Ministry and Oversight/Care Committee as for any other Quaker Concern. Sufficient time must be allowed for permission by a Regional Meeting. This would normally be through a scheduled Regional Meeting for Worship for Business, but other arrangements may be made (such as, but not limited to, a Clearness Meeting or special Meeting for Worship for Business) where time constraints require an early decision.</p> <p>Before agreeing to a couple’s request, the Regional Meeting, usually through a Registering Officer, establishes that both partners understand fully the nature of their commitment and that there is no spiritual or legal impediment. A Clearness Meeting could be offered. Regional Meetings throughout Australia treat equally all requests for celebration of marriage or commitment within our Meetings in accordance with Friends’ usages, regardless of the sexual orientation or gender of each of the partners. If the couple wish to register their marriage legally, there are formal procedures to</p>	<p><b>A marriage or commitment celebrated ‘in the care of the Meeting’ will be supported by that Meeting and its Ministry and Oversight/Care Committee as for any other Quaker Concern. Regional Meetings throughout Australia treat equally all requests for celebration of marriage or commitment within our Meetings in accordance with Friends’ usages, regardless of the sexual orientation or gender of each of the partners.</b></p> <p><b>Quaker couples wishing to be married or celebrate their commitment write to the appropriate Regional Meeting Clerk asking the Meeting to hold a special Meeting for Worship for marriage or commitment, and agree to a time and place.</b></p> <p><b>Sufficient time must be allowed for permission by a Regional Meeting, normally through a scheduled Regional Meeting for Worship for Business.-Other arrangements may be made such as a special Meeting for Worship for Business, where time constraints require an early decision.</b></p> <p><b>Before agreeing to a couple’s request, the Regional Meeting, usually through a Registering Officer, establishes that both partners understand fully the nature of their commitment and that there is no spiritual or legal impediment. A Clearness Meeting could be offered.</b></p> <p><b>The required permission of the Regional Meeting extends to the wording of the vows. If they are to differ significantly from the example in the pamphlet, <i>Quaker</i></b></p>	<p>A marriage or commitment celebrated ‘in the care of the Meeting’ will be supported by that Meeting and its Ministry and Oversight/Care Committee as for any other Quaker Concern. Regional Meetings throughout Australia treat equally all requests for celebration of marriage or commitment within our Meetings in accordance with Friends’ usages, regardless of the sexual orientation or gender of each of the partners.</p> <p>Quaker couples wishing to be married or celebrate their commitment write to the appropriate Regional Meeting Clerk asking the Meeting to hold a special Meeting for Worship for marriage or commitment, and agree to a time and place.</p> <p>Sufficient time must be allowed for permission by a Regional Meeting, normally through a scheduled Regional Meeting for Worship for Business. Other arrangements may be made such as a special Meeting for Worship for Business, where time constraints require an early decision.</p> <p>Before agreeing to a couple’s request, the Regional Meeting, usually through a Registering Officer, establishes that both partners understand fully the nature of their commitment and that there is no spiritual or legal impediment. A Clearness Meeting could be offered.</p> <p>The required permission of the Regional Meeting extends to the wording of the vows. If they are to differ significantly from the example in the pamphlet, <i>Quaker Marriage and Committed Relationships</i>, this may be considered at a subsequent Meeting for Worship for Business before the appointed date. The pamphlet is at: <a href="https://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/publications/australian-">https://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/publications/australian-</a></p>

<p>be followed, and the Registering Officer will advise. The required permission of the Regional Meeting extends to the wording of the vows. If they are to differ significantly from the example in the pamphlet Quaker Marriage And Committed Relationships at: <a href="https://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/publications/australian-publications/pamphlets">https://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/publications/australian-publications/pamphlets</a>, this may be considered at a subsequent Meeting for Worship for Business before the appointed date.</p> <p>It is likely that the Regional Ministry and Oversight/Care Committee will be asked to advise, as well as the Registering Officer. All ceremonies are minuted at a subsequent Meeting for Worship for Business.</p> <p>A couple who are not Quaker or linked to Friends may wish to celebrate their wedding or commitment within our Meeting House and 'in the manner of Friends'. They write to the appropriate Clerk to ask that the Meeting agree to such a ceremony, and agree to a time and a place. This decision is normally discerned by the Regional Meeting for Worship for Business.</p>	<p><i>Marriage and Committed Relationships, this may be considered at a subsequent Meeting for Worship for Business before the appointed date. The pamphlet is at: <a href="https://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/publications/australian-publications/pamphlets">https://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/publications/australian-publications/pamphlets</a>. It is likely that the Regional Ministry and Oversight/Care Committee, as well as the Registering Officer will be asked to advise on the chosen wording. All ceremonies are minuted at a subsequent Meeting for Worship for Business.</i></p> <p><i>If the couple wish to register their marriage legally, there are formal procedures to be followed, and the Registering Officer will advise.</i></p> <p><i><del>A Quaker Registering Officer can only conduct marriages for couples of whom at least one partner is a member or attender, and with the permission of the Regional Meeting.</del></i></p> <p><i><del>Couples who have a less significant link to Quakers may be married by the Quaker Registering Officer with the permission of the Regional Meeting.</del></i></p> <p><i>A couple who are not Quaker or linked to Friends may wish to celebrate their wedding or commitment ceremony within one of our Meeting Houses 'in the manner of Friends', and could do so as a venue hire. The couple would bring their own celebrant. Each meeting decides if they hire out one of their Meeting Houses for such occasions.</i></p>	<p><a href="#">publications/pamphlets</a> . It is likely that the Regional Ministry and Oversight/Care Committee, as well as the Registering Officer will be asked to advise on the chosen wording. All ceremonies are minuted at a subsequent Meeting for Worship for Business.</p> <p><i>The Regional Meeting gives permission for the marriage and establishes the Meeting for Worship for that purpose.</i></p> <p>If the couple wish to register their marriage legally, there are formal procedures to be followed, and the Registering Officer will advise.</p> <p><i>The Registering Officer follows the Marriage Act (Cwth), 1961 as amended, Section 2A(b) regarding whose marriage they can solemnise: Section 2A(b) - It is an object of this Act to create a legal framework ... (b) to allow ministers of religion to solemnise marriage, respecting the doctrines, tenets and beliefs of their religion, the views of their religious community or their own religious beliefs; ... .<sup>1</sup></i></p> <p>A couple who are not Quaker or linked to Friends may wish to celebrate their wedding or commitment ceremony within one of our Meeting Houses 'in the manner of Friends', and could do so as a venue hire. The couple could bring their own celebrant. Each meeting decides if they hire out one of their Meeting Houses for such occasions.</p>
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<sup>1</sup> This change in the Marriage Act was registered on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2018 after the same sex marriage legislation was accepted.

#### 4.6.4 Testimonies to the Grace of God in the lives of our Friends who have died

A new guideline was found **after DiA were published**. Those in the Prep Session were in unity with this guideline. BUT RMs have not had the opportunity to discern if this is an appropriate guideline. This and other changes made after feedback from RMs and the Preparatory session are shown **in purple font and highlighted** in the third column below. Black font in Column 3 indicates sections already agreed by ALL RMs.

Existing text 4.6.4	Proposed revision, in red	Proposed amended entry for discernment at YM22
<p>Guidelines: A testimony is not an obituary or eulogy. It should make the Friend come alive, showing failings as well as successes. The testimony should show the underlying qualities in the Friend's life ... We need to have records of Friends whose lives witnessed to the love of God. They are sources of inspiration. (Bowman, B., 'The grace of God', The Friend, 19.10.2001)</p> <p>Meetings write a Minute of Record upon the death of a Member, or regular Attender, who has been closely associated with their Meeting. The minute may be brief and factual, or extended. It is a response from the Meeting to the spiritual value of the life lived.</p> <p>The Regional Meeting then discerns whether or not to appoint Friends to write a 'Testimony to the Grace of God' in the life of the deceased Friend. Regional Meetings are careful who they appoint to this service, in view of the fact that there will need to be consultations with various family members.</p> <p>The preparation of a testimony is a collaborative effort.</p>	<p><del>Guidelines: A [T]estimony is not an obituary or eulogy. It should make the Friend come alive, showing failings as well as successes. The [T]estimony should show the underlying qualities in the Friend's life. We need to have records of Friends whose lives witnessed to the love of God. The [Testimonies] are sources of inspiration. (Bowman, B., 'The grace of God', The Friend, 19.10.2001)</del></p> <p>Meetings write a Minute of Record upon the death of a Member, or regular Attender, who has been closely associated with their Meeting. <b>The Minute may be brief and factual and is a record of the death of the Friend.</b></p> <p>The Regional Meeting then discerns whether or not to appoint Friends to write a 'Testimony to the Grace of God' in the life of the deceased Friend. Regional Meetings are careful who they appoint to this service <b>as there may need to be consultations with family members or others.</b></p> <p><b>A Testimony is the Meeting's response to the spiritual life of the Friend who has died, often expressed as the 'Grace of God' in that life. It covers such things as: their background, leadings, Concerns, struggles and expressions of their spiritual life. A testimony is succinct - it is neither a chronology nor a eulogy. It requires reflection by the writers to summarise the available information.</b></p>	<p>Guidelines: <b>[Our Society] would be an empty shell without the living expression of our faith provided by generations of individual Friends. Our custom of writing testimonies to the grace of God as shown in the lives of Friends provides us with a wealth of material showing ordinary Friends living out their faith from day to day. These testimonies show us that, whatever our circumstances, God can be present with us, and they encourage us each to be faithful to our own calling. (From the Introduction to Chapter 18 of Quaker faith and practice online. Britain Yearly Meeting, 2022.)</b></p> <p><b>When Friends learn that a Member or Attender of the Meeting has died, that Meeting initially minutes the death in its next MfWfB. The minute may be brief and factual and is a record of that death.</b></p> <p><b>The Regional Meeting also discerns whether to write a 'Testimony to the Grace of God' in the life of the deceased Friend. If agreed upon, the Meeting needs to ensure that the Friends appointed to write the Testimony fully understand what is involved</b></p> <p>A Testimony is the Meeting's response to the spiritual life of the Friend who has died, often expressed as the 'Grace of God' in that life. It covers such things as: their background, leadings, Concerns, struggles and expressions of their spiritual life. A testimony is succinct - it is neither a chronology nor a eulogy. It requires reflection by the writers to summarise the available information.</p>

<p>When consulting, the writers of the testimony need to make it clear to family and others that the resulting testimony will be publicly accessible and on our website.</p> <p>Those providing information have the right to see a copy of the completed testimony before the writers present it to the Regional Meeting and to request a restriction on access to the information they have provided.</p> <p>The completed testimony is brought to a Regional Meeting for acceptance or modification. When finalised, testimonies are sent to the AYM Secretary for inclusion in the Dictionary of Australian Quaker Biographies (see 5.5.3). This is useful for historical researchers.</p> <p>What a testimony covers.</p> <p>The testimony covers aspects of the Friend's life that reveal the workings of the Spirit in the world, as an inspiration to others. Testimonies focus on 'that of God' in the life now ended, the evidence of their spiritual life. It is neither a chronology nor a eulogy.</p> <p>When Friends are asked to write a testimony, these points may be helpful inclusions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• date and place of birth and death</li> <li>• occupation, marriage, children</li> </ul>	<p>When Friends are asked to write a Testimony, they might begin with a factual biography. The Friend may have provided such information to be safely stored by their Meeting. (AYM <i>Advices and Queries</i> 31 and 32). This could be added to the entry for that Friend in the <i>Dictionary of Australian Quaker Biography</i> (5.5.3) together with other information relevant to the life of the Friend (e.g. an obituary, Curriculum Vitae, mention of writings and publications, a photo). This could be useful to historical researchers.</p> <p>The Testimony may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• date and place of birth and death</li> <li>• occupation, marriage, children</li> <li>• date of Membership of the Religious Society of Friends, or length of time in the life of the Meeting</li> <li>• roles and participation in the life of the Society of Friends and in the wider community</li> <li>• Concerns and passions</li> </ul> <p>All of these sources of information may show how the Friend's life revealed their spiritual journey or the Grace of God.</p> <p>Those providing information for a Testimony are offered a copy of the completed Testimony before the writers present it to the RM and may request a restriction on access to the information they have provided.</p> <p>The completed Testimony is brought to a Regional Meeting for acceptance or modification.</p> <p>When finalised, Testimonies, and supplementary information are offered for inclusion in the <i>Dictionary of Australian Quaker Biography</i> [DAQB] (see 5.5.3).</p> <p>Shortened Testimonies to the life of some Friends are heard at Yearly Meeting.</p>	<p>When Friends are asked to write a Testimony, they might begin with a factual biography. The Friend may have provided such information to be safely stored by their Meeting. (AYM <i>Advices and Queries</i> 31 and 32). This could be added to the entry for that Friend in the <i>Dictionary of Australian Quaker Biography</i> (5.5.3) together with other information relevant to the life of the Friend (e.g. an obituary, Curriculum Vitae, mention of writings and publications, a photo). This could be useful to historical researchers.</p> <p>The Testimony may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• date and place of birth and death</li> <li>• occupation, marriage, children</li> <li>• date of Membership of the Religious Society of Friends, or length of time in the life of the Meeting</li> <li>• roles and participation in the life of the Society of Friends and in the wider community</li> <li>• Concerns and passions</li> </ul> <p>We are reminded that useful information for the Testimony may arise at the funeral, memorial Meeting or Meeting for thanksgiving</p> <p>All of these sources of information may show how the Friend's life revealed their spiritual journey or the Grace of God.</p> <p>Those providing information for a Testimony are offered a copy of the completed Testimony before the writers present it to the RM and may request a restriction on access to the information they have provided.</p> <p>The completed Testimony is brought to a Regional Meeting for acceptance or modification.</p> <p>When finalised, Testimonies, and supplementary information are offered for inclusion in the <i>Dictionary of Australian Quaker Biography</i> [DAQB] (see 5.5.3).</p> <p>Shortened Testimonies to the life of some Friends are heard at Yearly Meeting.</p> <p>Further information about Testimonies may be found on the AYM website under administrative resources for Regional Meetings.</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• date of Membership of the Religious Society of Friends, or length of time in the life of the Meeting</li><li>• roles in the Religious Society of Friends (though care should be taken not to list these to the detriment of more relevant material in relation to how their life revealed the grace of God)</li><li>• Concerns.</li></ul>	<p>Further information about Testimonies may be found on the AYM website under administrative resources for Regional Meetings.</p>	
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### 5.3.7 Types of AYM committees

*This matter is not about the wording of the Handbook, rather about the category for a particular committee. RMs considered the AF Committee's suggestion but were not in agreement with it. We offer a possible way forward, below Sections reworded in the light of feedback from RMs and the Prep Session are in purple font and highlighted .*

#### 5.3.7 Designation of the Australian Friend Committee that is no longer hosted by a RM.

**Issue:** The Australian Friend has been hosted by NSW RM since 2010. In DiA for YM 2020 the committee wrote that it would lay down its responsibility at YM 2020 but would continue until YM2021 if no other RM came forward to host the AF. AYM nominations committee had been informed beforehand.

No RM has come forward to host the AF. At YM2021, individual Friends from other RMs were encouraged to consider serving on the AF committee. During 2021 two such Friends came forward and this new arrangement with Friends from different RMs is working well, probably aided by our increased reliance on **and competence in using** electronic communications due to Covid.

AYM committees are “representative”, “expert or temporary working groups”, “hosted” by a RM or are specific AYM committees such as Standing Committee and AYM Nominations committee (5.3.7) **NB Both of these could be considered as Representative Committees.**

The AF committee and the AYM Nominations committee agreed on a new proposed entry at 5.3.7.3

**Proposal:** *“The Australian Friend Committee is a committee **in the care of AYM**. Such a committee can have members from different Regional Meetings. The names of the committee members can be brought forward by the AYM or a RM nominations committee.”*

Regional Meetings did not agree with the term “in the care of AYM” and this was repeated in the Preparatory session. Several alternate words have been suggested, such as ‘special gifts committee’, ‘an AYM committee with members drawn from several Regional Meetings’, ‘national committee’, ‘specialist committee’, ‘other committee’.

At the Preparatory session the Handbook Revision Committee was asked to propose a different name for this type of committee. Our suggestion is **Other Committees**.

If this change for the AF committee is acceptable to Friends, the Handbook Revision Committee, together with the Publications Committee will find a suitable way to make this change in the Handbook.

The Children’s and Junior Young Friends committee, at 5.3.7.3 is also mentioned as a hosted committee in the Handbook. This committee has had members from different RMs for some years. When there is unity about the new name for such a committee, this change will also be made for the Children’s and Junior Young Friends committee, and any other relevant committees.