

Chapter 16

Quaker marriage procedure

INTRODUCTION

- 16.01 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

- 16.02 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.'

Early Friends realised the importance of recording marriages which had taken place in a meeting for worship and increasingly recognised their responsibility for reporting such marriages to the authorities. They fervently maintained, however, that marriage was a solemn contract made in the presence of God in the meeting for worship. From the very early days of the Society stress was 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 were made by the parties in the presence of a number of members of the Society.

The basis of a Friends' marriage remains the same as in the early days of the Society. The simple Quaker wedding where the couple, together with their friends, gather in worship is for Friends the most natural setting for the two concerned to make a commitment to

Introduction

each other in the presence of God. With their declaration they take each other freely and equally as life-long partners, committing themselves to joining their lives together in loving companionship, asking God's blessing on their union. They believe that, whatever stresses and strains may arise in the relationship, these can be resolved if both partners are able and willing to accept and trust each other in a generous spirit. With God's help their love for each other can deepen and change in a lifetime of marriage together.

Britain Yearly Meeting has established certain procedures in the case of a marriage to be solemnised in a Friends' meeting for worship. This is partly to ensure that the legal requirements are observed and the proper records kept. Far more important, however, is the value of the procedure in emphasising to those being married the solemn nature of their undertaking; to the area meeting the need to uphold the parties concerned, both during the meeting for worship and thereafter; and to all those concerned, their corporate responsibility for the meeting for worship being rightly held. Couples contemplating marriage should at an early stage seek advice from their registering officer as to the entire procedure.

As a number of those attending the wedding may be unfamiliar with worship based on silence, it is particularly important that there should be a good attendance of Friends who come concerned for the spiritual depth of the occasion. A meeting for worship for the solemnisation 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 all those who attend the meeting for worship to ask God's blessing on the marriage and support the parties to it in their prayers.

A selection of Friends' views may be found at Marriage and steadfast commitment 22.33-22.50 and Ending of relationships 22.73-22.79. For seventeenth-century practice see 19.56.

- 16.03 We think it right to remind our members of the ancient testimony of our Society, that marriage is not a mere civil contract, but a religious act.

16: Quaker marriage procedure

Yearly Meeting in London, 1848

SUMMARY OF PROCEDURE

- 16.04 Quaker marriage is not an alternative form of marriage available to the general public, but is for members and those who, whilst not being in formal membership, are in unity with its religious nature and witness. Usually, however, one or both of the parties being married will be members or they will be otherwise associated with the Society. Additionally, the Marriage Act 1949 relating to England & Wales places certain limitations on who may be married according to Friends' usage.
- 16.05 Anyone contemplating marriage according to the usage of Friends should at an early stage apply to the registering officer of the area meeting in the area in which it is intended that the marriage should take place. Ideally this should be at least three months before the intended marriage, and it must be not less than six weeks beforehand, to give time for the necessary procedures to take place (see also 16.23-16.27 & 16.33). The couple must complete a declaration of intention of marriage (16.12-16.13 & 16.17). They must also fulfil all the legal requirements for a marriage, including obtaining the appropriate certificates from the registrars of the districts in which they live. Couples may consider the holding of a meeting for clearness as part of their preparation for marriage (16.19-16.21).

Those not in membership need to complete additional requirements, including a discussion with at least two members of the Society and perhaps through the holding of a meeting for clearness, to help the area meeting to assess whether there is sufficient unity of understanding, or association with the Society, to allow a marriage according to Quaker usage to go forward (see 16.13). (For the responsibility of overseers in this matter see 12.13.o.)

- 16.06 Once an application for marriage has been approved, public notice of the intended marriage will be given at the meeting(s) which the couple attend, and the area meeting will appoint, or ensure the

Summary of procedure

appointment of, a meeting for worship for the solemnisation of the marriage. A brief explanation at the start of this meeting will generally be given for any of those attending who have not been to a Quaker marriage, or meeting, before. During the course of the meeting the couple will stand if able and exchange declarations of marriage in prescribed words (16.36-16.37). Wedding rings play no formal part in Quaker marriages, but many couples like to give each other rings after they have made their declarations. Neither photography, nor potentially disturbing electronic recording is suitable during the meeting for worship. At an appropriate stage during the meeting a certificate confirming the declaration is signed by the couple and two or more witnesses, and is then read aloud by the registering officer, or other suitable Friend. After the meeting it is customary for all present when the declarations were made to sign the certificate.

16.07 In brief, those to be married must:

- a. apply to the registering officer for their marriage to be solemnised according to the usage of Britain Yearly Meeting (16.12-16.18);
- b. obtain support in writing from two adult Friends for each non-member applicant (16.13);
- c. give notice of intention as required by law in England & Wales to the superintendent registrar and obtain the certificates (16.22-16.26);
- d. give notice of intention as required by law in Scotland and obtain the marriage schedule before marriage and arrange for the legal registration of the marriage after it has been solemnised (16.22-16.26 & 16.46);

The registering officer must arrange for:

- e. the giving of public notice of the intended marriage in the meeting or meetings to which the parties belong or which they usually attend (16.23);
- f. ensuring in England and Wales that the certificate (form D) and any duplicates required are in the hands of the superintendent registrar(s) for those intending to marry who are not in membership (16.25-16.26);

16: Quaker marriage procedure

- g. ensuring that the relevant meeting for church affairs appoints the meeting for worship at which the marriage will take place (16.27-16.30);
- h. notice of the intended meeting for worship to be given in accordance with 16.35;
- i. the solemnisation of the marriage at the meeting for worship; in England and Wales the registration of the marriage after the meeting, and in Scotland the appropriate signing of the schedule (16.36-16.40 & 16.46).

16.08 No marriage following these procedures can take place which is not authorised by law. The procedure laid down in 16.12-16.18 & 16.22-16.35 must also be completed before the marriage takes place.

OFFICERS

16.09 The officers concerned with the arrangements for marriages are:

- a. the clerks and registering officers of area meetings: these are officers of the yearly meeting and their names and addresses may be ascertained from the Book of meetings or by enquiry among local Friends;
- b. the superintendent registrars (England & Wales) or the district registrars (Scotland): these are public officials responsible for registration districts.

Registering officers

16.10 Each area meeting shall appoint a suitable Friend as registering officer for the purpose of these regulations, and, in England & Wales, but not in Scotland, to register all marriages that may be solemnised according to the usage of the Society within the area meeting. Area meetings are advised to review their appointments regularly, normally on a triennial basis. The registering officer shall register only such marriages as are solemnised within the limits of the area meeting by which he or she is appointed. On every fresh appointment of a registering officer the area meeting making the

Officers

appointment shall report to the Recording Clerk without delay, by minute signed by the clerk, the name and address of the registering officer newly appointed. The Recording Clerk is required to certify all such appointments in England & Wales to the Registrar General and, for such appointments in Scotland, to the clerk of General Meeting for Scotland who will inform the Registrar General for Scotland.

- 16.11 The area meeting is responsible for the appointment of a meeting for worship for the solemnisation of a marriage, directly or by giving permission to a local meeting (see 16.27). The registering officer, acting on behalf of the area meeting, is responsible for the acceptance of an application for marriage according to Friends' usage. He or she is also responsible for giving the parties the necessary advice and assistance in relation to the procedure under these regulations, for seeing that all the necessary steps preceding the marriage are completed, and, in England & Wales, but not Scotland, for the registration of the marriage. He or she should feel free to consult the area meeting clerk or some other knowledgeable Friend to check that the appropriate forms have been properly completed. Area meetings may also appoint from time to time two or three Friends whom the registering officer can consult in cases where he or she feels this necessary or desirable. A handbook for registering officers is available from the Recording Clerk.

All powers and duties given to the clerk of an area meeting or local meeting shall, in the case of her or his absence or incapacity, be exercised by the assistant or acting clerk of the same meeting.

PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE

Application

- 16.12 One of the parties wishing to be united in marriage should apply for a copy of the marriage forms (see 16.54) to the registering officer of the area meeting under the auspices of which they wish the marriage to take place. Form A is a joint declaration of intention of marriage, stating the time and place of the meeting for worship at which it is

16: Quaker marriage procedure

desired that the marriage may be solemnised. If necessary the date and time (but not the place) of the marriage may be omitted when filling in form A, but in such cases particulars should be sent to the registering officer as soon as possible. Before form A is completed the registering officer should be satisfied that there is no evident difficulty in the intended marriage being held at the time and place proposed. Form A should be completed and returned (together with form B and/or C if appropriate) to the registering officer not less than six weeks before the date of the intended marriage. It need not be signed by both parties at the same time or in the presence of each other, but the signature of each of the parties must be attested by one adult witness. The registering officer should meet with both the parties to discuss their application and to give such advice and assistance as may be necessary. If this proves impossible, the registering officer should ask the registering officer of an area convenient for the parties to meet with them. The registering officer should also consider whether there might be advantage in meeting the parties separately.

- 16.13 If one or both of the parties is not in membership, each party not in membership should in addition complete form B (if a man) or form C (if a woman); these are applications for permission to marry according to the usage of the Religious Society of Friends. Each application must be supported by the written recommendation of two adult members of the Society.

The two adult members are expected to have discussed the application with the parties, even if the applicant(s) is already known to them. If the applicant(s) is not known to them, then a home visit, perhaps to each party not in membership individually, may be appropriate. Alternatively, the discussion could take place within a meeting for clearness (16.19-16.21). The two Friends should be satisfied that each applicant is in unity with our testimony as to the nature of marriage, and has experience of our meetings for worship. They must not be close relatives of either party.

The completed forms B and/or C should be returned together with form A to the registering officer, who will follow the procedure described in 16.18.

Advice to registering officers and area meetings

- 16.14 The registering officer is advised to meet with the applicants at a very early stage, preferably before they complete the marriage forms, so that the Quaker testimony on marriage may be talked over, to ensure that the applicants understand the nature of Quaker worship, our testimony to simplicity and the avoidance of ostentation, and are ready to make their declarations in the form required. The registering officer may find it an advantage to draw one or more other Friends into these conversations, or use a meeting for clearness (16.19-16.21). It is the duty of the registering officer to forward an application for a marriage to the meeting for church affairs which is responsible for appointing a meeting for worship for this purpose (16.27-16.31).
- 16.15 The registering officer, acting on behalf of the area meeting, also has the responsibility for granting permission to non-members to marry according to our usage (see 16.13, 16.16 & 16.18, noting the different procedure between a England & Wales and b Scotland). The registering officer should be satisfied that care has been taken to ensure that those applying for a Friends' marriage are in unity with our testimony as to the nature of marriage (see 16.01-16.03). It is on this testimony that the claim rests for recognition of our special and privileged procedure.
- 16.16 Special care should be exercised in the following cases:
- a. where neither party is known to the registering officer;
 - b. where neither party is a member;
 - c. where either party has had a previous marriage dissolved;
 - d. where either party has been in a long-term relationship with another person, especially where children are involved.

If the registering officer does not feel able to allow arrangements to proceed without further consideration, in these and other cases where special care is necessary, the matter should be referred to the area meeting or to such Friends as may have been appointed for the purpose. The registering officer is advised to take this action where

16: Quaker marriage procedure

either party has had a previous marriage dissolved, as suggested in 16.17.

Re-marriage of divorced persons

- 16.17 Area meetings should be sympathetic to and understanding of those who wish to marry in a Friends' meeting and who have been divorced. Many in this situation may have experienced a sense of failure in their lives and feel deeply that they have not been able to keep solemn promises they have made in the past. We should all be able to share these feelings, realising the occasions when we have experienced a sense of failure and have not lived up to promises we have made. Whilst in no way departing from our corporate testimony as to the sanctity and life-long nature of marriage, area meetings are given discretion whether or not to grant permission to those who wish to re-marry in a Friends' meeting.

In exercising such discretion, area meetings will need to be fully satisfied that those who wish to re-marry share this testimony and, except in rare cases, are well known to and associated with the meeting. As recommended by London Yearly Meeting in 1957, area meetings might well appoint certain Friends of sound judgment and discretion to consider each application and so assist the meeting in reaching a decision without undesirable discussion of details in the meeting itself. See also 16.19-16.21 and 12.22-12.25 on the use of meetings for clearness.

See also 22.73-22.79 for extracts on the ending of relationships

Permission to non-members

- 16.18 On receipt of the completed forms A and B and/or C as the case may be, the registering officer, if assenting to the application, shall, if the marriage is to be solemnised in England or Wales, issue form D to the party, or each such party, not in membership and resident in England or Wales. Form D is a certificate granting permission for marriage to be solemnised according to the usage of the Society in Britain. If the parties have to give notice to different superintendent registrars, form D should be issued in duplicate for the party, or

Preparation for marriage

each such party, not in membership (see 16.22 & 16.25-16.26). In Scotland the issuing of form D to non-members does not apply to residents.

If the registering officer does not accede to the application he or she shall refer the matter to his or her area meeting which may grant or refuse the application at its discretion. If the area meeting grants the application, the registering officer shall proceed. If the area meeting refuses the application, the clerk shall inform the parties in writing immediately.

The use of meetings for clearness in preparation for marriage

- 16.19 Some area meetings have re-introduced a former practice. On receiving a request for a marriage according to Friends' usage, they offer to appoint a meeting for clearness as part of the preparation involved. They recognise that this may provide an opportunity, for both the couple and those invited to take part, to explore the nature of the commitment that is being contemplated. The small group of Friends and the couple will get to know one another at a deeper level. Prayerful consideration in a relaxed atmosphere is time well spent. It may be of benefit to the couple in later years.

The origin of these meetings was to ensure that the persons contemplating marriage were 'clear' of any encumbrance. Nowadays the name is used to indicate a search for clearness as to whether the proposed course of action is right.

- 16.20 The proposal to hold a meeting for clearness may be initiated either:
- a. by the couple themselves if they are not yet sure whether it is right for them to marry or to ask for a Quaker ceremony. They may want to consider the implications more deeply with a group of Friends prior to formal application. This may or may not involve the registering officer;
 - b. by the registering officer in the course of initial discussions about marriage procedures. He or she would explain to the couple how such a meeting is called and that it should be viewed as a helpful part of the preparation for marriage

16: Quaker marriage procedure

rather than an examination as to their fitness for it. The aim of such a meeting is to allow the couple to explore what their commitment will mean to them as they plan their future life together;

- c. by the area meeting, particularly where there are special circumstances that need careful consideration, or if one or both of those asking for a Quaker marriage are not well known to the meeting (see 16.16).

Whether or not a meeting for clearness is held, all the procedures and requirements outlined in this chapter will have to be carefully considered and complied with.

16.21 The conduct of meetings for clearness is covered in 12.22-12.25. A few special points should be noted in this context:

- a. it will not be appropriate to include close relatives of the couple in the membership of the meeting for clearness;
- b. when an application has been received and it is agreed that a meeting for clearness should be held, at least one elder or one overseer (or experienced Friend, where these officers are not appointed) should be included in the group; in most such cases the registering officer will also join it so that he or she is in a position to give guidance to the area meeting as to whether the marriage should be allowed;
- c. any personal matters that are disclosed in the course of the meeting should be regarded as confidential to the group;
- d. subsequently, the registering officer should be in a position to recommend to the area meeting whether or not the couple should be allowed to marry according to our usage.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR MARRIAGE

Notice to registrar

16.22 Before a marriage can be solemnised in England or Wales according to the usage of Friends, notice must be given by the parties concerned to the appropriate superintendent registrar and a

The meeting for worship

certificate obtained by each party. The certificates should be obtained from the superintendent registrar(s) for the area(s) in which the parties live, and should be delivered to the registering officer as soon as possible after they are obtained. For marriages in Scotland a marriage schedule is obtained from the registrar for the district in which the marriage is to take place and this should be sent to the registering officer as soon as possible after it has been obtained (see 16.46.b).

Registering officers are strongly advised to have in their possession not less than twenty-four hours before the ceremony the certificates of the appropriate superintendent registrar(s) in England or Wales, or the appropriate schedule issued by the district registrar in Scotland. In England and Wales marriages may take place in areas other than those in which the certificates were issued, but in Scotland marriages must take place within the area of the district registrar issuing the marriage schedule. In no case can a marriage be solemnised without the production of the certificates or schedule.

Public notice of intention of marriage

- 16.23 On receipt of form A the registering officer, if assenting to the application, shall cause 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, if not in membership, which they attend or which is the nearest to their place(s) of residence. Such notice shall be in the terms of, or to the effect of, form E. Form E shall be endorsed by the Friend by whom the notice is given. If the registering officer receives any notice of objection, which must be in writing, he or she shall immediately inform the parties.

Marriages when one or both parties are resident outside Great Britain

- 16.24 In any case where one, or both, of the parties is resident outside Great Britain, or is not a citizen of the United Kingdom, the registering officer is advised to refer to the superintendent or district registrar for advice as to any additional formalities which may have to be completed, or any modifications which may have to be made

16: Quaker marriage procedure

to the procedure outlined above. It should be noted that the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands are outside Great Britain.

Marriage by certificate

16.25 a. *Marriages in England and Wales*

Each party must give notice of the intended marriage, in person, to the superintendent registrar of the district in which he or she resides, and has resided for at least seven days. Such notice should be accompanied by the appropriate fee and should be on the prescribed form which will be supplied by the superintendent registrar on application. After the expiration of fifteen clear days the superintendent registrar will, on application, deliver a certificate stating that the notice required by law has been duly complied with. The superintendent registrar's certificate is valid for twelve months after the entry in the marriage notice book, after which it expires. After expiry, the application must start afresh.

If one or both of the parties reside in Scotland, notice must be given to the district registrar(s) of the registration district(s) in Scotland in which each party has her or his usual residence or has been resident for fifteen clear days immediately previous to the giving of such notice, and the certificate(s) of such district registrar(s) must be obtained and will have the same validity as a certificate of a superintendent registrar.

If either of the parties is not in membership, a certificate (form D) in respect of each such party must be produced to each superintendent registrar (for parties resident in England or Wales), or district registrar (for parties intending to marry in England or Wales but resident in Scotland), at the time when such notice is given.

b. *Marriages in Scotland*

In Scotland, under the provision of the Marriage (Scotland) Act 1977, each of the parties to a marriage shall submit to the district registrar a 'marriage notice' accompanied by the prescribed fee and certain documentary evidence. No residential qualification is

The meeting for worship

required. Provided that the other party submits a marriage notice, a party resident in the United Kingdom outside Scotland may submit to the district registrar an 'approved certificate' which will be issued, in the case of England or Wales, by the appropriate superintendent registrar. However, although allowed under the act, this procedure is more cumbersome than submission of a marriage notice directly to the district registrar, and is, in practice, rarely followed, since a marriage notice is always required for the other party. The district registrar will normally be able to issue a marriage schedule fourteen days after entering the marriage notice, if this means it is being issued less than seven days before the marriage. Provision is made, however, for the issue of a marriage schedule earlier than fourteen days subject to the completion of certain formalities and the approval of the Registrar General.

Marriage by licence

16.26 a. *Marriages in England and Wales*

The procedure of marriage by licence in England & Wales in order to reduce the time required under the procedure by certificate was abolished by amendment of the Marriage Act (1949) in 2000. Nevertheless, there are provisions for certificates to be supplied under the authority of the Registrar General in a period shorter than fifteen days under certain exceptional circumstances.

b. *Marriages in Scotland*

In Scotland, the Marriage (Scotland) Act 1977 abolished the procedure of marriage by licence in favour of provision for the district registrar supplying, under certain safeguards, a marriage schedule in a period shorter than fourteen days (see 16.25.b).

Although the procedures under a and b above reduce the time involved in obtaining the necessary documents from the registrar, time must still be allowed for the proper appointment of the meeting for worship and other procedures as described in the following sections

THE MEETING FOR WORSHIP

Appointment of meeting for worship

- 16.27 A meeting for worship for the solemnisation of a marriage is the responsibility of the area meeting within the area of which it is held. It is normally to be appointed by the area meeting. The area meeting may, however, grant permission to a local meeting in its area to appoint meetings for worship for the solemnisation of marriage. Such permission should be given only to a specific local meeting or local meetings deemed capable of discharging this responsibility, but should not be given generally as a matter of course to all its local meetings. Permission should be given only where it is reasonable to expect the attendance of a sufficient number of well-concerned Friends at any such meeting for worship as the local meeting may appoint. The area meeting should make arrangements for the regular review of the delegation of such permission, which may be withdrawn at any time. Where a meeting for worship for the solemnisation of marriage is desired at a meeting held less frequently than once a week, or where it is proposed to hold a marriage in Scotland at a place where no regular public meeting for worship is held, the appointment shall always be made by the area meeting.
- 16.28 In cases where the area meeting is the appointing body and serious inconvenience would be caused if the appointment of a meeting were delayed until the next area meeting, the clerk of the area meeting may, in consultation with the registering officer and such other Friends as he or she considers appropriate, make the appointment on its behalf. Such action is to be minuted at the next area meeting.
- 16.29 In cases where the local meeting is the appointing body, and serious inconvenience would be caused if the appointment of a meeting were delayed until the next local meeting for church affairs, the clerk of the local meeting may, in consultation with the registering officer, arrange for Friends at the meeting concerned to make the

Recording of marriages

appointment at the conclusion of meeting for worship. Such action is to be minuted at the next local meeting for church affairs.

- 16.30 As soon as possible after the receipt of the completed form A (and forms B and/or C in the case of those applicants who are not in membership), the registering officer shall, through the clerk of the area or local meeting for church affairs (as the case may be), bring before it the application for the appointment of a meeting for worship (form F). The meeting shall decide whether a meeting for worship may be appointed at the time and place desired by the parties or at any other time and place which may be mutually convenient. If the certificates (16.25-16.26) have not been received, the meeting for worship may be appointed subject to the satisfactory completion of these formalities. The registering officer shall inform one of the parties of the decision of the meeting.
- 16.31 The meeting making the appointment is recommended to ensure, by the appointment of a sufficient number of suitable Friends, that the meeting for worship may be rightly held in accordance with our usage. Marriages are often attended by relatives or friends who have no previous experience of a meeting for worship. The couple may feel it helpful to send invited guests copies of such leaflets as are available on the conduct of marriages, or they may choose to send a letter of their own composing with the invitation, telling guests of the form of worship, the procedure and what is expected of them. Elders have responsibility (12.12.f) for the conduct of the meeting for worship. It is now common practice for them, in consultation with the registering officer and the couple, to arrange for a Friend to give a short explanation of Friends' manner of worship and the proceedings at the outset of the meeting.

Time and place of meeting for worship

- 16.32 In appointing the time and place of the marriage it is desirable that the registering officer should be consulted in order that he or she may be present. (In cases where the registering officer is unable to be present see 16.47.)

16: Quaker marriage procedure

a. *Marriages in England & Wales*

Although Friends' marriages are exempted from certain provisions of the Marriage Act 1949, nevertheless it has been decided by the yearly meeting that marriages shall be solemnised on any day within the hours enacted for marriages generally (between the hours of eight in the morning and six in the afternoon) in a meeting house or other place to which the public has access and where a recognised public meeting for worship is regularly held at least once every calendar month.

For the solemnisation of marriages according to the usage of Friends it is not required that the premises should be registered for marriage, but area meetings are cautioned against appointing such meetings for worship, particularly in the case of smaller recognised meetings, unless they are held in premises known locally as places of public worship after the manner of Friends.

There is legislative provision for the solemnisation of marriages in hospitals and private houses when exceptional circumstances exist, that is where one of the persons to be married is seriously ill and is not expected to recover and cannot be moved to a place at which a marriage could normally be solemnised. Any exceptional arrangements require close consultation between the Recording Clerk, the registering officer, and the superintendent registrar.

b. *Marriages in Scotland*

In Scotland a marriage may be solemnised at any hour and place; the use of a meeting house therefore is not obligatory. The meeting for worship has to be specially appointed by or on behalf of the area meeting (16.27-16.29). The area meeting should be satisfied that there are adequate reasons why the marriage could not be solemnised in a place where a regular public meeting for worship is held, and that a sufficient number of Friends will be able to attend at the time and place proposed to ensure that the meeting for worship is rightly held in accordance with our usage.

16.33 Where one or other of the parties has associations with another church or religious body and wishes to be married according to the

Recording of marriages

procedure of that body as well as by Friends' usage, this may be done in accordance with the law in England & Wales, but only if both legal ceremonies take place separately on the same day. In all other respects, the normal procedure, including registration, should be undertaken, and the two separate legal ceremonies must not be seen to be combined in any way. However, care is needed to ensure that those being so married are in sympathy with Friends' testimony as described in 16.01-16.02. (See 16.07-16.08, 16.13 & 16.18.)

- 16.34 Some couples may wish to have a meeting for worship in loving support of their marriage either before or after a legal ceremony has taken place elsewhere. In such a case it is important that it is made quite clear that the meeting is not a formal marriage. The wording of any declaration must reflect this. Advice on the procedure in this situation may be had from the Recording Clerk.

Public notice of meeting for worship

- 16.35 Public notice of a meeting for worship appointed for the solemnisation of marriage shall be given at the place at which it is to be held at the close of the usual meeting for worship last held there before the day of solemnisation. In cases where a marriage is to be held in a meeting house or other premises where a meeting for worship is held less often than once a week, public notice of the meeting for worship for the solemnisation of marriage may be given by placing a notice on the notice board outside the meeting house or other premises a week in advance. If this is not possible, advice should be sought from the Recording Clerk. The registering officer shall ensure that such notice is given (form G).

16: Quaker marriage procedure

Declaration

- 16.36 When the meeting for worship is gathered, the parties at a convenient time shall stand and, taking each other by the hand, declare in an audible and solemn manner, the one after the other in either order, the man saying:

Friends, I take this my friend [name] to be my wife, promising, through divine assistance, to be unto her a loving and faithful husband, so long as we both on earth shall live.

and the woman in like manner saying:

Friends, I take this my friend [name] to be my husband, promising, through divine assistance, to be unto him a loving and faithful wife, so long as we both on earth shall live.

The declaration may be prefaced by 'In the presence of God' or 'In the fear of the Lord and in the presence of this assembly'. The phrase 'through divine assistance' may be replaced by the words 'with God's help'. The phrase 'so long as we both on earth shall live' may be replaced by the words 'until it shall please the Lord by death to separate us'. No other changes to the wording may be made.

The declaration must be made in English (but see 16.38), except that in all places where the Welsh tongue is commonly used a Welsh form of the declaration may be used.

The following is a translation into Welsh of 16.36 less the final sentence:

Datganiad

- 16.37 Pan fo'r cyfarfod i addoli wedi ymgynnull mae'r ddeuddyn, pan fo'n gyfleus, i sefyll, a chan afael y naill yn llaw y llall, i ddatgan yn eglur ac yn ddifrifol, y naill ar ôl y llall, ym mha bynnag drefn y dymunant, gyda'r dyn yn dweud:

Gyfeillion, yr wyf i yn cymryd fy nghyfeilles [enw] yn wraig i mi ac yn addo, trwy gymorth dwyfol, y byddaf iddi hi yn ŵr cariadus a ffyddlon gyhyd ac y byddom ein dau fyw ar y ddaear.

Yn yr un modd y mae'r wraig i ddweud:

Gyfeillion, yr wyf i yn cymryd fy nghyfaill [enw] yn ŵr i mi ac yn addo, trwy gymorth dwyfol, y byddaf iddo ef yn wraigariadus a ffyddlon gyhyd ac y byddom ein dau fyw ar y ddaear.

Gellir cynnwys, fel rhagymadrodd i'r datganiad, y geiriau 'Ym mhresenoldeb Duw' neu'r geiriau 'Yn ofn Duw ac ym mhresenoldeb y gynulleidfa hon'. Yn hytrach na'r geiriau 'trwy gymorth dwyfol' gellir dweud 'trwy gymorth Duw'. Yn lle'r geiriau 'gyhyd ac y byddom fyw ar y ddaear' gellir defnyddio 'hyd nes y gwêl yr Arglwydd yn dda ein gwahanu trwy angau'. Ni oddefir unrhyw newidiadau eraill.

- 16.38 If one or other of the parties wishes to make the declaration in any other language then that may be done, but the Registering Officer needs to ensure that an interpreter is present to testify to the words spoken. In addition, the parties concerned should repeat the spoken words to the best of their ability in English.
- 16.39 If, by reason of an impediment of speech or otherwise, either of the parties is unable to make the declaration distinctly, then the registering officer present at the marriage shall read the declaration audibly and the party shall signify assent to its terms in some clear and unmistakable way so that the registering officer is satisfied that the meeting has understood this assent.

RECORDING OF MARRIAGES

Certificate of marriage

- 16.40 A certificate prepared beforehand by the parties, with the following wording, is to be signed during the meeting by the man and by the woman with her surname used immediately prior to marriage. Directly after it has been signed by at least two of those present as witnesses, it is to be read audibly by the registering officer or other suitable Friend. Others present at the marriage who have heard the declarations 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.

16: Quaker marriage procedure

16.41 Tystysgrif priodas

Gan i [enw]* a [enw]* fynegi eu bwriad i gymryd y naill a'r llall mewn priodas a gan i'r bwriad hwnnw gael ei hysbysu'n gyhoeddus fe ganiatawyd y gweithrediadau gan swyddogion cymwys Cyfarfod Misol o Gymdeithas Grefyddol y Cyfeillion.

Hyn sydd i dystio i [enw] a [enw], er dathlu eu priodas, fod yn bresennol mewn cyfarfod addoli cyhoeddus o'r Gymdeithas a benodwyd yn†

ar y dydd o'r mis yn y flwyddyn

Gan gymryd llaw y naill a'r llall,

Datganodd [enw]:

a datganodd [enw]:

Mewn cadarnhad o'r datganiadau hyn maent, yn y cyfarfod, wedi arwyddo'r dystysgrif hon.

.....

.....

Yr ydym ninnau hefyd, a fu'n bresennol yn ystod y briodas, yn torri ein henwau yma fel tystion ar y dydd, y mis a'r flwyddyn a ysgrifennwyd uchod.

.....

.....

*Yma dodder cyfeiriad neu riaint.

†Yma dylid rhoi cyfeiriad y tŷ cwrdd neu pa bynnag fan y bo.

Recording of marriages

- 16.42 Copies of this certificate in scroll or book form may be obtained from Quaker Bookshop at Friends House, but self-made versions are also acceptable.
- 16.43 The certificate of marriage is to be used only when the procedure has been followed in accordance with the provisions in this chapter.

It should not be used in other circumstances, as, for instance, at a meeting for worship held in conjunction with a marriage not according to our usage.

Registration of marriage

- 16.44 Immediately after the conclusion of the meeting, the marriage shall, in England and Wales, be registered by the registering officer, as provided in 16.46.a; in Scotland the procedure outlined in 16.46.b shall be followed.

Care and disposal of marriage registers (England and Wales)

- 16.45 For marriages in England & Wales the requisite marriage register books will be supplied in duplicate to registering officers from the office of the Registrar General, whose address may be obtained from the Recording Clerk or the local superintendent registrar. When the duplicate register books are filled, one of them is to be delivered to the superintendent registrar of the district to which the registering officer has been assigned by the Registrar General; the other is to remain under the care of the area meeting, and is to be kept with their other records (4.40.c). This procedure is not necessary in Scotland, although registering officers there do need to obtain copies of the certificates.

Registration procedure

- 16.46 a. *Marriages in England and Wales*

16: Quaker marriage procedure

In England and Wales the legal registration of the marriage is carried out by the registering officer. As soon as possible after the solemnisation of a marriage, the registering officer, having received the proper certificates, and being satisfied that the marriage has been solemnised in accordance with the usage of the Society, shall register, or cause to be registered, the several particulars of the marriage in the duplicate register books. Every such entry shall be signed by the parties married and by at least two witnesses, and by the registering officer.

b. *Marriages in Scotland*

In Scotland the legal registration of the marriage is carried out by the district registrar and not by the registering officer. No marriage may be solemnised unless the parties produce to the registering officer a marriage schedule (16.25.b). Immediately after the solemnisation of the marriage the marriage schedule shall be signed by the parties, by both witnesses, and by the registering officer. The parties shall within three days thereafter deliver the marriage schedule to the district registrar who shall cause the particulars to be entered in the register of marriages kept by her or him.

Provision for absence of registering officer

- 16.47 Should the registering officer be prevented through illness or absence from home or any other cause from issuing or signing the marriage forms in 16.12, he or she (or failing this the clerk of the area meeting) shall be at liberty to appoint any suitable Friend to act for him or her in these respects. It must be emphasised that this should not become a normal manner of proceeding.

If, in England and Wales, the registering officer should be prevented from being present at the solemnisation of the marriage, care shall be taken that the entries be, notwithstanding, duly made and signed by the parties and witnesses. The registering officer, having been satisfied of the regularity of the proceedings, shall afterwards add her or his signature: no person may sign the register in her or his place.

In Scotland, a deputy appointed as above may sign the statutory marriage schedule, and if it is known beforehand that this will be

Recording of marriages

necessary the name of the deputy should be given to the district registrar who issues the schedule.

Certified copies from marriage registers

- 16.48 For marriages in England & Wales the Registrar General supplies, on request, a book of forms for issuing to an applicant a certified copy of any entry in the marriage registers. A registering officer shall, if required, issue a certified copy of any entry in any of the marriage registers of the area meeting by which he or she is appointed. For this an appropriate fee is payable. At least one copy is made for the couple in any case after the marriage. No one but the registering officer may sign a certified copy. In cases of doubt, due to any change of area meeting area, the Recording Clerk shall determine which registering officer has authority to certify such a copy.

For marriages in Scotland, application should be made to the district registrar.

Correction of errors

- 16.49 In filling up the registers (for marriages in England & Wales) great care must be taken that no error is committed. On the discovery afterwards of any error in an entry, the registering officer shall, within one calendar month after such discovery, in the presence of the parties married, or, in the case of their absence, then in the presence of the superintendent registrar of the district, and of two other witnesses (who are respectively to attest to the same), correct the error by entry in the margin without any alteration of the original entry, and he or she shall sign the marginal entry and shall add to it the date when the correction is made. In Scotland, these matters are dealt with by the district registrar.

Registering officers' quarterly returns

- 16.50 Every registering officer in England and Wales shall make a quarterly return, in January, April, July and October, of a copy of the

16: Quaker marriage procedure

entries of the marriages that have been registered by her or him in the three calendar months preceding or, if no marriage has been registered by her or him in that period, a certificate that such is the case. This return, with the relevant certificates, shall be delivered to the superintendent registrar of the district to which the registering officer has been assigned by the Registrar General.

Blank forms for these certified copies and nil return certificates are supplied from the office of the Registrar General (whose address may be obtained from the Recording Clerk) or may be available from the local superintendent registrar.

In Scotland, returns are made by the district registrar.

Report of marriages

Report to area meetings

- 16.51 The marriage being solemnised and duly registered, the registering officer shall report the same to the area meeting (form H). The area meeting shall record by minute the receipt of such report with particulars of the membership of the parties, and the date and registration of the marriage.

In cases where either party is a member of an area meeting other than the one under the auspices of which the marriage has taken place, the registering officer of the area meeting responsible for the marriage shall report it to the clerk of each such area meeting, which shall similarly record the particulars of the marriage by minute.

Transfer of membership on marriage

- 16.52 An area meeting on receipt of a report of a marriage of one of its members shall ask overseers to consult with the Friend, in order that any transfer of membership may be made as soon as possible after the marriage. If any such transfer is required it shall be by certificate for transfer of membership, according to usual practice (11.24-11.27). If it is not possible for a decision to be taken at the time of

Recording of marriages

marriage as to what transfer of membership should be made, the question shall be continued in the care of overseers.

Area meeting returns

- 16.53 At the beginning of each year the forms for the purpose supplied by the Recording Clerk should be returned by area meetings listing all marriages that have been solemnised during the previous year under their auspices according to the usage of the Society, or, if applicable, stating none.
- 16.54 Copies of the forms mentioned in the above regulations, other than those supplied by the office of the Registrar General, will be supplied to registering officers by the Recording Clerk. Meeting for Sufferings is responsible for the printing and publication of these forms, and for any revision of them which may be required from time to time.

Marriages taking place outside Great Britain

- 16.55 When any members of Britain Yearly Meeting intend to solemnise their marriage outside Great Britain, they are recommended to conform to the usage of our Society in respect of marriage, so far as is possible within the laws of the country and those of our own. They should report their course of procedure and furnish evidence of such a marriage to the area meeting(s) in this country to which they belong, and the area meeting(s) should record the marriage in its minutes. It should be noted that the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands are outside Great Britain.

Membership not acquired by marriage

- 16.56 A person not in membership shall not acquire by marriage any right of membership of Britain Yearly Meeting, notwithstanding that the other party to the marriage is a member. Meetings are encouraged to make welcome those who become associated with them through marriage to one of their members.