Midlothian Friends Meeting
Marriage Process

1. Note that someone ***not associated with meeting*** who wants to rent the meetinghouse for their marriage, should contact the Building and Grounds committee clerk. There is no involvement of meeting in such a marriage
2. Weddings arranged by Midlothian Friends Meeting are open for attendance by any Friend associated with Midlothian Friends Meeting. Private weddings, where the family invites chosen individuals, are not arranged by Midlothian Friends Meeting; although if the members of the family have current or past association with Midlothian Friends Meeting, they may use the meetinghouse or its grounds at no charge for their private event.
3. The process outlined within this document applies only to Friends associated with Midlothian Friends Meeting,. At least one person in the couple getting married should be associated with Midlothian Friends Meeting.
4. The request for a wedding is made by the couple to any one of the Care Coordinators at Midlothian Friends Meeting, who will take the request to *Meeting for Discernment* so an ad-hoc committee can be appointed to administer the marriage event. It may be necessary to approach some Friends to see if they are willing to serve on this ad-hoc committee, especially if the couple has expressed a preference for certain Friends to be on the ad-hoc committee. This is especially the case since the ad-hoc committee will usually serve as the Clearness committee when a couple is married under the care of the meeting.
5. At Midlothian Friends Meeting most aspects of the wedding are left to the couple and their family. The meeting has no standard or recommended format for the wedding, except that it should be enveloped in silence where attendees may speak as the Spirit moves them. Many couples do choose to have some aspects of programming amidst the silence, as well.
6. A member of the ad-hoc committee should meet with the couple and explain the process associated with the two options available:
    A. Marriage in the manner of Friends
    B. Marriage under the care of meeting
7. With either option chosen by the couple, it is customary that all Friends associated with Midlothian Friends Meeting are invited to the wedding meeting for worship, since it is indeed a meeting for worship open to the entire meeting. This should be explained to the couple.
8. Without prior approval from *Meeting for Discernment*, marriages should ***not*** be performed during the usual Sunday morning worship. This is in keeping with a prior *Meeting for Discernment* decision to always leave Sunday morning worship entirely unprogrammed.

A. Marriage in the Manner of Friends

1. Marriage “In the Manner of Friends” means that the couple has a typical Quaker wedding administer by the ad-hoc committee. However, there is no care from the ad-hoc committee by way of a Clearness Committee before invitations to the wedding and reception are sent to family and friends. And there would be no automatic ongoing support to the couple should trouble between them arise throughout the

years of their marriage from a previously created Clearness committee that is always available to them (of course a Clearness committee may be created at the time a need arises).

2. A member of the ad-hoc committee should meet with the couple to discuss the particulars of the wedding and reception; such as date and time, and whether the meetinghouse will be used. There is no rental fee for the meetinghouse for a couple where at least one of them is associated with Midlothian Friends Meeting.
3. The ad-hoc committee member should make it clear to the couple that being married in the manner of Friends means that the wedding has elements of unprogrammed worship centered around the couple and the exchanging of vows will be provided by them to each other. No human will officiate; although to ensure that the marriage is legally binding under the laws of the commonwealth of Virginia, an individual authorized to observe and execute a marriage license is required to attend.
4. Notification of the wedding date should also be made by the ad-hoc committee to the entire meeting via a formal means (newsletter or email routing). Information regarding the reception should also be made available if there will be one.
5. If the marriage is to be a legally recognized marriage by the Commonwealth of Virginia, the ad-hoc committee should arrange to have a legally authorized member of meeting attend the wedding and conduct the marriage legal work required by the Commonwealth of Virginia and the locality from which the Marriage License was obtained. This legally authorized member will:
    a. Ensure that the required procedures necessary to "legalize" the marriage under the law are followed, including certifying to the appropriate local jurisdiction and the appropriate agencies of the Commonwealth of Virginia that the couple has legally married each other under the law;
    b. Attend to any other legal requirements to ensure that the marriage is legally valid under the law; and
    c. Mail the license and other necessary documents after the wedding to the appropriate Clerk of Court and governmental agencies.
6. The ad-hoc committee should provide a greeter for the wedding meeting for worship and arrange one or both of the following in advance of the wedding meeting for worship:
    a. A brief flyer for guests unacquainted with a Quaker wedding that explains the wedding meeting for worship; and/or
    b. A brief announcement at the beginning of worship that explains the purpose of the occasion and also invites those attending to speak out of the silence as the Spirit moves them.
7. The ad-hoc committee should have at the wedding meeting for worship a certificate suitable for framing that all those attending the wedding may sign after the wedding meeting for worship. This certificate is for the couple to keep as a reminder of the vows they exchanged.
8. Arrangements for the wedding reception are not part of the ad-hoc committee's duties in regards to the wedding. That should be arranged by the couple or their family/friends.

B. Marriage Under the Care of Meeting

1. Marriage "Under the care of Meeting" means that the couple has both a typical Quaker wedding arranged by the ad-hoc committee ***and*** is provided care from the ad-hoc committee by way of a Clearness Committee before invitations to the wedding and reception are sent to family and friends. There would be automatic ongoing support for the couple should trouble between them arise throughout the years of

their marriage from the same Clearness (ad-hoc) committee who first met with them before their marriage took place. This ongoing support would occur at the couple's initiation.

2. This marriage option begins with the couple considering together (without anyone else present) the queries related to marriage in the Baltimore Yearly Meeting's (BYM) Faith and Practice manual.
3. Once the couple completes that consideration, they should notify the ad-hoc committee that they are ready to experience a Clearness committee for their marriage using the same Friends who were appointed to the ad-hoc committee. The normal process for Clearness Committees should be used (follow the guidelines in the *Midlothian Friends Meeting Handbook*).
4. Once the Clearness Committee meeting is accomplished and the couple has reached clarity to be married, they should proceed to invite friends and family to the wedding and reception, as well as notify all Friends at meeting about the wedding through whatever means is available.
5. *Meeting for Discernment* should be notified by the ad-hoc committee that the couple is clear to marry, and the impending marriage under the care of the meeting should be documented with a minute even though no decision by the meeting is being made.
6. A member of the ad-hoc committee should meet with the couple to discuss the particulars of the wedding and reception; such as date and time, and whether the meetinghouse will be used. There is no rental fee for the meetinghouse for a couple associated with Midlothian Friends Meeting.
7. The ad-hoc committee member should make it clear to the couple that being married under the care of meeting means that the wedding has elements of unprogrammed worship centered around the couple and the exchanging of vows which they will provide to each other. No human will officiate; although to ensure that the marriage is legally binding under the laws of the commonwealth of Virginia, an individual authorized to observe and execute a marriage license is required to attend.
8. If the marriage is to be a legally recognized marriage, the ad-hoc committee contact should arrange to have a legally authorized member of meeting attend the wedding and conduct the marriage legal work required by the Commonwealth of Virginia and the locality from which the Marriage License was obtained. The authorized observer member will:
    a. Ensure that the required procedures necessary to "legalize" the marriage under the law are followed, including certifying to the appropriate local jurisdiction and the appropriate agencies of the Commonwealth of Virginia that the couple has legally married each other under the law;
    b. Attend to any other legal requirements to ensure that the marriage is legally valid under the law; and
    c. Mail the license and other necessary documents after the wedding to the appropriate Clerk of Court and governmental agencies.
9. The ad-hoc committee should provide a greeter for the wedding for worship and arrange one or both of the following in advance of the wedding meeting for worship:
    a. A brief flyer for guests unacquainted with a Quaker wedding that explains the wedding meeting for worship; and/or
    b. A brief announcement at the beginning of worship that explains the purpose of the occasion and also invites those attending to speak out of the silence as the Spirit moves them.
10. The ad-hoc committee should have at the wedding meeting for worship a certificate suitable for framing that all those attending the wedding may sign after the wedding meeting for worship. This certificate is for the couple to keep as a reminder of the vows they exchanged.

11. Arrangements for the wedding reception are not part of the ad-hoc committee's duties in regards to the wedding. That should be arranged by the couple or their family/friends.
12. The ad-hoc committee should bring a minute to be recorded at *Meeting for Discernment*, noting that the marriage occurred under the care of meeting on [*date*]. This should be done even though no decision is being made.