

From the Board of Elders, NWYM, July 2015

Recognizing that our yearly meeting is unable to embrace our current diversity, and recognizing the shattering that is ensuing, with grace and charity we sorrowfully release West Hills Friends Church from NWYM membership. It is our hope that this will free WHFC to pursue the call of God they have discerned. We record our respect for the process WHFC has followed and the sincerity of their convictions, which include their affirmation of committed same sex relationships and the decision to perform those weddings. We are grateful for the respect this body has shown us as elders and for the friendships that have developed. We grieve our loss, even as we recognize the pain this community will feel at being disconnected from the NWYM of Friends. We have experienced WHFC as a strong, healthy, growing community of Christian Friends, and we know that in spite of this painful and unwanted action, they will continue to thrive, perhaps forming other connections. We nurture the hope that a reconnection with NWYM might be possible in the future.

Even so, out of love for the whole of NWYM, we sense that this is the way forward. While we respect WHFC's convictions, we recognize that the NWYM as a whole is not in any position to recognize same-sex marriages or record as pastors people who are living in committed same-sex relationships. We discern that taking no action in the case of WHFC would only cause more shattering at this point in time.

Our *Faith and Practice* provides a way to appeal this decision.

We recognize that as a yearly meeting, we are not in consensus over our statement on human sexuality in the *Faith and Practice*. We recognize that we need to do the hard work of theological reflection as Friends on the issues of revelation (including the authority of both the written and living Word of God) and human sexuality (in a broader sense than just LGBTQ issues). As elders we plan to facilitate this reflection. We need to seek and discover what God is saying to us at this time around these issues, in a spirit of humility, love and faith in a God who delights to unlock these mysteries.

In the meantime, we plead with the people, pastors and congregations to NWYM, on all sides of these issues, to commit to doing this hard work together. Can we decide to love each other? Can we hold on to our love of Jesus and the Word of God, refraining from words or actions that would only cause more pain and division? Can we give the culture around us reason to say, "See how they love one another!"

Ken Redford, Clerk
Board of Elders, NWYM