

Homosexuality and Quakerism

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The views of the Religious Society of Friends toward homosexuality encompass a range from complete acceptance and celebration of same-sex marriage, to the view that homosexuality is abhorrent and sinful.

Since decision-making among Friends is generally based on seeking "unity" or following the "sense of the meeting", some Quaker groups may find themselves unable to agree, even where a substantial majority support one position. Similarly, even in meetings that explicitly support a full spectrum of rights for gay couples, there may be dissenting members.. In the United States, which has large numbers of unprogrammed meetings, which tend to be theologically and socially liberal, and programmed meetings, which tend to be more theologically and socially conservative (as well as conservative unprogrammed meetings), the discussion of homosexuality has occasionally been a painful one, lasting in some cases many years without unity.

Finally, the organization of Monthly meetings—(or simply "meetings")—the basic unit of Quakerism, (a meeting being equivalent to a single congregation, or a Monthly Meeting to a Parish (or group of Churches in an area)) -- into larger groups such as Yearly meetings or other "umbrella" groups is convoluted at best, making determination of a particular Quaker "attitude" difficult. Some groups, for example the *57th Street Meeting* in Chicago, or Baltimore Yearly Meeting, may have joint membership in umbrella groups that have mutually contradictory stances on the issues. In the end, the true "Quaker view" on homosexuality is probably best analyzed meeting by meeting (or, better, Friend by Friend.) However, there are some general patterns, and for reasons of space and completeness this article deals mainly with the largest organizations on a country-by-country basis.

Moreover, Quakers are non-creedal. Being a member in good standing at a meeting does not necessarily imply endorsement of any official statements of that meeting.

North America

Quakers in the United States are divided on the issue of homosexuality, with some (mostly Friends affiliated with programmed meetings) not approving of either homosexuality or the legalization of same sex unions. Friends associated with Friends General Conference (FGC), the more liberal group of Friends encompassing a large number of yearly meetings, and approximately a fifth of all Quakers in the country, are the most tolerant with many monthly meetings and some yearly meetings providing full equality for homosexuals including marriage. FGC itself in 2004 made a statement on including lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender (LGBT) Quakers as equals in worship and acknowledging their past contributions to the conference.