

Bethesda Friends Meeting
Minute: Privacy and the State
(Adopted July 17, 2022)

Friends live in the Light that there is that of God in every person, and that the spiritual journey is one of continual seeking and revelation. Often life brings us to difficult moments of decision making. We are taught to hold these decisions in the Light, seeking guidance by Spirit. Often, we turn to our community for help in gaining clarity. Bethesda Friends Meeting respects the individuality of each person's spiritual journey, knowing that decisions can lead to both endings and beginnings, often in unexpected ways.

The decision to have, or not have, children and the decision of whom to marry, or not marry, are deeply personal decisions to be made by the person or people involved, in the presence of the Spirit. With that of God, every person of every gender and every family has the right of autonomy which includes pregnancy termination.

If a Friend or couple is struggling with a question regarding these personal decisions and asks the Meeting for help, it is the practice of Bethesda Friends Meeting to provide a clearness committee or otherwise support them in their decision-making.

In our role in making public policy, Friends should also work to assure that any such decisions are decriminalized, and an individual's right and ability to carry out their decision is preserved.

**This minute builds on a statement from the 1988 edition of BYM's Faith and Practice, which reads: When the number of children exceeds the financial, physical and even spiritual capacity of the parents, a hardship is worked on by all involved. Thoughtful decisions either to have or not to have children should be accepted and supported by the Meeting.*