

# 2019 Supplement

to the

2014 Interim Faith & Practice  
New England Yearly Meeting

Membership

Dying, Death, and Bereavement

This supplement contains additional text that has received preliminary approval by New England Yearly Meeting in Annual Sessions.

As additional texts are approved, additional Supplements will be produced.

12. Patricia McKernon Runkle, *Grief's Compass: Walking the Wilderness with Emily Dickinson*, Apprentice House Press, 2017, pp 5, 109.
13. Edward Baker, unpublished poem, 2017.
14. Memorial Minute for Elizabeth Poynton, Worcester Friends Meeting, Worcester, Mass, 2019.
15. Lisa Graustein, personal communication, January 2019.

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1. Romans 8:38–39.
2. William Penn, “Some Fruits of Solitude,” 1693, maxims 503, 505, and “More Fruits of Solitude,” 1693 maxims 127–134. *A collection of the works*, 1726, vol 1, pp 841, 850–851; *Select works*, 1782, vol 5, pp 162–163, 183.
3. Rufus Jones, *The Luminous Trail*, 1947, pp 163–164.
4. Bradford Smith, *Dear Gift of Life: A Man’s Encounter with Death*, Pendle Hill Pamphlet #142. 1965, pp 15–16. This selection includes an extract from unpublished notes Feb–May 1964, and an extract from an unpublished article Sep 12, 1963.
5. Cecil E. Hinshaw, “On living and dying,” *Friends Journal*, August 1–15, 1979, pp 4–5.
6. Diana Lampen, *Facing Death*, 1979, pp 9–10, 17. The order of some sentences has been changed.
7. Jenifer Faulkner, “Out of the depth,” *The Friend*, vol 140 (1982), pp 805 – 806. Abbreviated with the author’s consent.
8. Stephen Redding, “Parting Time,” *Friends Journal*, March 2010, pp 21–23.
9. Maggie Edmondson, from a message, “At the still point of the turning world,” written in 2016.
10. Shannon Zimmerman, “A Quaker’s Passing: My Father’s Way,” *Friends Journal*, August 2017, pp. 8–10.
11. Geoff Knowlton, “Beauty; Beauty Everywhere,” *Friends Journal*, Online Feature: The Art of Dying, August 1, 2017. <https://www.friendsjournal.org/integrity-and-the-ultimate/>

In cases where the maintenance of a burial ground no longer in use has proved burdensome to the meeting, the possibility of turning it over to the care of others may be considered, with due regard to the use to which the ground would be put.

## Membership

**Presented at the 2019 NEYM Annual Sessions  
Given Preliminary Approval August 4, 2019**

### Introduction

The personal decision to request membership in a monthly meeting in New England Yearly Meeting of Friends represents a marker in a person's relationship to their spiritual community and in their relationship to the Divine presence. This section is addressed both to attenders who are considering applying for membership and to those who have been members for many years, or a lifetime. It also provides guidance to monthly meetings. Appendix 4 includes templates and other information concerning practical aspects of the membership process.

### General Considerations

There was no formal membership in the Religious Society of Friends for the first 85 years. Individuals were considered Quakers if they participated in meetings for worship, had experienced the Living Christ or Inward Light, felt themselves in unity with Friends, and were prepared to make public witness to their faith. Commitment to how Friends lived their faith was a defining trait and Quakers took care to know, keep in touch with, and support one another. Today the commitment and intention of a person to live according to the faith and practice of Friends is recorded as membership in a monthly meeting following the discernment process of a meeting's clearness committee on membership.

Friends trust that there is an underlying Truth that can unify all our individual perceptions when we open ourselves to

direct and unmediated encounters with God. In New England Yearly Meeting we do not ask that all who come into membership name this encounter in the same way. New England Friends name this experience variously, including God, Christ Jesus, Spirit, Inward Light, Truth, and Love. Trust in the possibility of Divine guidance that transcends our individual will is crucial because on this rests unity and spiritual authority within the Religious Society of Friends. Experience of the Inward Light gives us the basis for spoken ministry during worship, for how we do business, and for how we “let our lives speak” as we live our testimony in the world. The Society holds the faith that we can witness with transformed lives to the power of the Spirit, known to us individually and collectively. The meeting holds us accountable for our willingness to seek Truth, and the actions that arise from that search.

When entering into membership, we ask individuals to describe their spiritual experience and understanding from a place of openness and to hear the experience of others with openness and respect. The life of the Spirit is released and vitalized when we use our own authentic spiritual language and voice. Yet it is also true that the words used to convey spiritual mysteries and understandings that are life-affirming to one person may be distressing for another. The Society will not ask its members, and members should not expect to ask others, to change authentic descriptions of spiritual experience to accommodate another member’s discomfort with that language or way of encountering the Divine. Each member’s perception and attunement to the Spirit of Truth is valuable and needs to be offered and received with humility, knowing that we each perceive Truth only in part. We continually seek through honest and sensitive exploration of our differences to uncover our spiritual unity.

make careful corporate decisions concerning the well being of the institution and its members. If donors have a specific interest they wish to support with their gift, a letter naming the interest is sufficient to guide the institution and its members to support that interest as they are led. A Friends institution may choose to refuse a bequest if it finds the terms of the gift are not in keeping with its mission or with their leadings.

When making a bequest, donors should be mindful that the funds will be invested consistent with Friends principles and concerns. This may mean that funds will not be invested for the highest rate of return.

In American society it has become common for educational buildings, philanthropic funds, and the like, to carry the name of a donor or of a person or family being memorialized. This is not consistent with Friends principles.

## 7G. Burial Grounds

Meetings that maintain their own burial grounds should establish policies governing interments, the marking of graves, and the keeping of records. The meeting should appoint a committee of two or more Friends to have oversight of the burial grounds and to insure adherence to the policies. The committee should take care that a plot or reservation of space in the burial ground does not, in the passage of time, pass from meeting control or ownership.

In establishing regulations as to grave markers, meetings should observe the principles of moderation and simplicity. Meetings without burial grounds may wish to create and maintain gardens of remembrance where members’ cremated remains may be scattered or buried.

of this Friend's life. Describing the positions the Friend may have held within the Society, or in their secular life may be less meaningful than describing the quality of presence and commitment they brought to their service. Some Friends may themselves have written statements about their life as a Friend. These statements are often a precious record in the Friend's own voice, and with careful judgment, might be included in the minute. When considering what to include in a memorial minute the following queries may be helpful:

- How does the inclusion of this information in the memorial minute reflect the movement of the Spirit in this Friend's life?
- What gifts of the Spirit did this Friend bring to the meeting?
- Are there meetings, organizations, or individuals in the Yearly Meeting, or in other Quaker institutions, who should be contacted to bring fuller understanding of the Friend's life and service?

Monthly meetings may send their memorial minute to Quaker organizations in which the Friend was involved, or to other places the meeting deems appropriate where the Friend was active, for non-Friends who may not be aware of the death.

## 7F. Bequests

When making a bequest to a Friends' institution, Friends are asked to be mindful that restrictions on the gift may impede the needs and leadings of the community in the future. A gift that is restricted to a specific use, may, over time, become difficult to access or use given the changing needs of an institution, or the leadings of its members. Friends should trust those charged with financial care to

*“The Society of Friends might be thought of as a prism through which the Divine Light passes, to become visible in a spectrum of many colours; many more, in their richness, than words alone can express.”*

**Christian Faith and Practice in the experience of the Society of Friends, London Yearly Meeting 1960, Introduction to Chapter 1.**

It is important for meetings to articulate clearly the expectations and understandings that go along with membership. Uncertainty, vagueness, or a superficial membership process can inadvertently result in dilution of Quaker faith and practice.

Membership is held in a monthly meeting, and by virtue of that membership one also holds membership in a quarterly meeting and in New England Yearly Meeting, our ultimate denominational body. But it should also be recognized that membership is in the Religious Society of Friends as a whole; that we are a part of something larger than the Quakers in the six states of New England. The Yearly Meeting holds membership in and supports several national and international groups: Friends General Conference (FGC), Friends United Meeting (FUM), and Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC). These cover a diversity of Quaker practice, experience, theology, history, and cultural background. Awareness of this implies acknowledgment that not all Friends meetings are alike and that we sometimes struggle with those whose beliefs, language, or practices differ from our own, in some way.

## To Those Considering Membership

It is through experience that a person grows in the Spirit. The journey may begin with powerful experiences of Divine presence and guidance, a pressing need to be in relationship with God, or a feeling of discomfort with other

religious paths. At some point a person may become convinced that the Quaker path is where they can best serve others or that their way of seeking and following Divine guidance is Quaker. For other individuals the journey begins through participation in social justice activities and witness of Friends, where they encounter the spiritual impulse that lies at the heart of this work. The most transformative values and actions of Friends arise as an outgrowth of obedient listening to the Inward Teacher.

Becoming a member is an outward sign of an inward reality. Membership shows an individual's commitment to the Friends' faith community, as well as the commitment of the Society to the individual member. While no act of joining imparts any special sanctity or favor, membership is of value and importance because it unites Friends in a shared commitment to a well-traveled path and its disciplines. Friends welcome fellow travelers to walk alongside them on their journeys, but not all fellow travelers seek or are taken into membership. When seasoned members of a meeting discern that a faithful attender may be ready to explore membership, it can be very helpful to gently suggest it to them. The consideration of membership can clarify the attender's relationship to the meeting and bring increased vitality to their spiritual journey. Joining the Religious Society of Friends affirms to the outside world that a person wishes to be counted as a Quaker. It is a public acknowledgment, a statement of faith, and a commitment to the local meeting and to the Religious Society of Friends as a whole.

An understanding of all Quaker ways is not a requirement for membership. The patient accumulation of experience with other Friends and participation in the meeting's life has been shown to be the most useful teacher. For those who are feeling called into membership, participation in meetings for worship and for business is essential. The essence of being a member is the relationship among the

Words. The meeting's pastor or other designated Friend will generally open and close the meeting and offer words of transition between each element of the service.

## 7E. Memorial Minutes

### *Writing a Memorial Minute*

When a member of the Religious Society of Friends has died, it is customary for the meeting to write a memorial minute. Unlike an obituary, a memorial minute considers the ways in which the deceased Friend's religious convictions have been expressed through the Friend's actions, relationships, and spiritual gifts. The memorial minute becomes a permanent record, for the meeting and the Religious Society of Friends, of the grace of God as expressed through the life of the deceased Friend. The process of writing a memorial minute starts in the monthly meeting Ministry and Counsel. The committee may choose other members of the meeting to do the writing. Small meetings may wish to write these minutes as a committee of the whole, and large meetings may name a subcommittee specifically organized to fulfill the work. When the draft is completed Ministry and Counsel ensures the readiness of the work before presenting the memorial minute for approval to meeting for business. All memorial minutes approved by a monthly meeting are sent to one's Quarterly meeting and from there to the Yearly meeting.<sup>6</sup>

There is no required length, either short or long, but a memorial minute should be a truthful and conscientious expression of the distinctive fruits of the Friend's religious life. Care is taken to honestly reflect the difficulties and the joys

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<sup>6</sup> *In 2018, the Yearly Meeting wrote suggestions for writing memorial minutes. Monthly meetings wishing additional guidance in writing these minutes may request that advice from Permanent Board.*

### A Memorial Service in the Manner of Friends

Welcome family and Friends of \_\_\_\_\_, to the \_\_\_\_\_ Friends Meeting. A Friends memorial service is a special meeting for worship in the traditional manner of Friends. It is a meeting of thanksgiving for the life of the one we have known and loved and by whose presence we have felt blessed. As Quakers we gather for worship in listening and expectation: it is our understanding that in the silence all people can experience God directly. The ministry that occurs comes from those in attendance, as they listen inwardly to God. Anyone present may speak, or remain silent, as the Spirit directs. Tears and laughter are both appropriate. It is not in silence nor in words, but in sincerity of heart that we testify best to the goodness of God as we have seen it manifest in the life of our friend. We seek, in prayer and worship, to give thanks to God, the creator of our friend, and of us all.

If you wish to speak, please stand (*and wait for the microphone*) so that all can hear you clearly. We encourage you to leave a few moments for silent reflection of the previous message before you stand to speak. The responsibility for the spiritual depth of the meeting rests with each attender. Those who keep silence, as well as those who give a vocal message, do their part when they yield their minds and hearts to the guidance of the Spirit.

The close of the service will be signaled with a handshake and greetings passed among those present.

In the programmed tradition an order of service may be printed including such elements as Greeting and Greeting Words, Readings, Music, Prayers, Scriptures, Overview of the deceased Friend's Life, Open Worship, and Parting

member, the meeting, and the Divine. A careful reading of NEYM's *Faith and Practice* will help the applicant gain an understanding of Friends' ways of worship, the transaction of business, and the responsibilities of membership. Friends come together to learn—to learn from one another, certainly, but most importantly to learn from the Inward Guide.

*Queries for those considering membership are found at the end of this chapter following "Membership Advices and Queries."*

### The Member and the Meeting Community: A Covenant Relationship

Membership is a mutual commitment between the individual and the Religious Society of Friends, within the framework of a particular monthly meeting. In accepting someone into membership the meeting's commitment is to offer opportunities for, and assistance in, spiritual growth; to help individuals discover and use their gifts; and to offer pastoral care as needed. Members commit to living their daily life in accordance with the faith and practice of Friends, to encouraging and cherishing other individuals in the meeting, and to being supportive of the spiritual and temporal well being of others. Members commit to participation in the life of the meeting as they are able: regularly attending meetings for worship and business; contributing their time and energy; and, according to their means, contributing financially. Being a member of the Religious Society of Friends is a relationship of mutual trust before God, and like other intimate, trust-based human relationships it is not always easy or risk-free.

### Responsibilities of Membership

Membership comes with different expectations than those held for attenders. With membership comes the privilege

and challenge to participate fully in the life of the Society, to be stretched and sometimes made uncomfortable.

Some long-term attenders have become valued parts of the common life of their meetings without seeking membership. Some Friends see only afterward that they became inward members long before formally seeking membership, drawn by the bonds of relationship and responsibility that occur naturally in a religious community. In a welcoming meeting, all persons are nurtured by participation in activities and responsibilities at any level of involvement. Yet meetings should discern carefully who has the authority to make decisions important to the life of the meeting. It is the members of a meeting who bear the burden of spiritual and societal accountability for acts of conscience and for decisions that have legal ramifications. For this reason, trustees, treasurer, clerk, and recording clerk of a meeting; members of Ministry and Counsel; members of the Membership committee; and representatives to the quarterly and yearly meeting Ministry and Counsel should be members of the meeting. In small meetings with few members, care should be taken that all legal documents are signed by a member or an individual given such authority by the meeting.

### **Types of Membership**

The process of becoming a member of a monthly meeting is always initiated by a request. A child becomes an associate member by parental or guardian request. An individual becomes an adult member by personal request. Both types of membership are a formal recognition that the person is a valued part of the life of the meeting and that the meeting has accepted responsibility for their pastoral care. It is hoped that children who are associate members will eventually choose to request membership in their own right. NEYM no longer grants “birthright” membership. Any

- *A printed program:* ascertain whether or not the family would like a printed program and what their estimate is of the number needed. Are there special quotations or pictures to include? Would the family like the meeting to handle this or would they prefer to do it themselves?
  - *Refreshments:* What can the meeting reasonably provide? Often the refreshments are provided jointly by the meeting and family members of the deceased.
  - *Guest book:* Does the family wish to provide one or would they like the meeting to provide it?
  - *Child care during the memorial service:* Is the meeting able to provide child care should it be needed?
  - *Memorial display:* Would the family like to create a display of mementos and photos? Where will it be placed?
  - *Overnight hospitality:* Is the meeting able to offer hospitality if it is needed?
  - *Logistical responsibilities:* Confirm the chosen date and time with your meeting’s scheduler and make sure arrangements have been made as needed for cleaning, opening and closing the meetinghouse, snowplowing, flowers, catering, and setup and clean up people.
- Consider the capacity of the meeting house in relation to the expected attendance. Will a sound system be needed?

Assign Friends to serve as greeters, to answer the telephone, to help handle parking issues.

### **7D. Memorial Meeting Printed Programs**

In addition to the person’s name, birth and death dates, and the location and date of the memorial meeting, the printed program may include some facts about the person’s life and/or a photo, picture, or favorite text. In the unprogrammed tradition something like the following may be added:

immediate and long-term care of dependent children and other instructions concerning their care.

*Pets:* Give the name and phone number of whoever will provide care for your pets.

### 7C. Planning a Memorial Meeting

A memorial meeting is a meeting for worship celebrating the movement of the Spirit and the grace of God in the life of a deceased Friend. It is usually arranged by members of Ministry and Counsel, another designated committee, and/or the meeting's pastor, in consultation with the family and in accord with any wishes recorded by the Friend. In some cases two services may be appropriate to meet both the needs of the family and the needs of the meeting. Meetings or their pastors may be asked to provide this service for people who are not part of the meeting community, and need to be clear how to respond to this request.

In an unprogrammed meeting, a designated Friend is appointed to briefly explain how the meeting will be conducted and to invite participation of the worshippers. A memorial meeting in the programmed tradition will generally include readings, prayers, and music in addition to information on the deceased's life and a time of open worship. Below are considerations when planning a memorial meeting. Meetings are advised to consider what they can reasonably offer before making a commitment to a bereaved family.

#### *The Memorial Meeting:*

- *Welcome and closing:* Usually a Friend from the meeting will be appointed to open and close the meeting.
- *Planned program:* Are there any wishes for particular readings, music, musicians, or persons to speak? If so, what will the family and what will the meeting organize?

member in NEYM who was granted birthright membership in the past retains their membership. Ultimately, all membership that embraces responsibility for full participation in the life of the meeting is through personal request of the individual.

#### *Adult Membership*

When a person feels moved to apply for membership, an application should be made in writing to the monthly meeting, addressed to the clerk of the meeting. The details of the membership process are laid out in Appendix 4.

#### *Membership of Children by Parental Request*

Adult members may request that their children be accepted as associate members. Such a request for membership is made in writing to the clerk of the monthly meeting. Associate membership is granted by the monthly meeting if both parents are adult members of the meeting or if one parent is an adult-member of the meeting and the non-member parent consents. Children are not expected to take on the responsibilities of adults but are in every other way regarded as members of the meeting whose spiritual lives are valued and encouraged. Associate membership is an interim membership lasting until the individual has grown in the spiritual life to conviction when they may request membership based on their own personal choice. See Appendix 4 for the details of this process.

Embracing young children as members in this way is an expression of the understanding that children and young people have a unique and valued role and relationship within the meeting community. It is a part of the meeting's covenant to actively nurture the spiritual well-being and growth of its children and to provide spiritual and practical support to their parents in this endeavor. As spiritual maturity develops in parallel with an understanding of the Quaker faith, Friends hope that the young person will embrace this

path as their own. At that time the young person writes a letter to the clerk of the monthly meeting stating their readiness for adult membership. The meeting takes up the request as in the case of any applicant for adult membership. The purpose of the clearness process at this time is to provide the meeting and the young friend an opportunity to clarify their relationship and to recognize that its nature has changed. When young adults apply for membership care should be taken to acknowledge that many young people relocate frequently and that this is not a barrier to membership. Some form of regular, reciprocal contact is, however, necessary to maintain the integrity of the membership relationship. Being received into adult membership acknowledges that Quakerism is the member's spiritual path even though their attendance may be sporadic.

Some young adults may choose to postpone adult membership until they are settled and can fully engage with a meeting community. Many have active spiritual lives where they live their witness. The home meeting of such an associate member should inquire whether they would welcome the meeting's regular contact and continued concern for their spiritual well-being. If the answer is affirmative, the meeting should make a commitment to the care of these Friends, maintaining regular contact with them as an encouragement to continue to stay engaged with their Quaker community.

### *Sojourning*

A member who is temporarily living away from their home meeting may become a sojourning member of the meeting they are attending without giving up membership in their home meeting. (See Appendix 4F)

### *Non-Resident Members*

It is important for meetings to keep in touch with members who live at a distance, including those sojourning in

- Would you choose a green burial (no embalming; only readily biodegradable shroud or container), and do you know the associated regulations for your state?
- You may wish to stay informed of other options for body disposition as they develop.

### *If you choose cremation:*

- Do you plan to have the funeral director transport your body to the crematorium, or do you prefer to have those close to you do so?
- Do you have a particular vessel you would like to use for containment of your cremated remains?
- Would you like your cremated remains scattered in a particular place? Is this a legal possibility?

### *If you chose to donate your body:*

- Have you contacted the appropriate organization and made the arrangements?
- Have you communicated an alternative plan in the event your donation cannot be accepted?

*Memorial service or funeral:* Do you have a preferred location? Is there someone you would like to officiate? Is there music you would like? Do you want to have flowers? Who should be notified, near and far? Do you have any other specific instructions?

*Charitable donations:* Provide names and addresses of organization(s) you wish to receive memorial donations in your name.

*Obituary:* You may wish to write this yourself, or choose someone else to do it. Who has information about your life?

*Care of dependent children:* Note the names and phone numbers of those you have chosen to take responsibility for

- **Bank accounts:** Information that will allow access
- **Credit cards:** Bank name, account number, card location, contact information
- **Safe deposit box:** Location of box, location of key
- **Annuities, life insurance policies:** Location of these documents, name and phone number of representative or agent to contact.

## 7B. Personal Wishes and Final Arrangements

(Some meetings may have their own forms to offer. It is important to have this information collected for the family.)

**Personal data:** Pertinent documents along with telephone numbers of executor of will/trust, etc.

**Contacts:** List key persons who would be willing to notify networks of other people, such as an immediate family member, a professional colleague, a close friend, etc.

**Instructions for final arrangements:** It is advisable to review and update these decisions regularly.

**Funeral director:** Does your state require you to use a funeral director? If you need or choose to have a professional funeral director involved, indicate the name, address and phone number. Have you talked with this funeral director?

Consider what your wishes are for disposal of your body or cremated remains: Would you prefer burial or cremation or donation of your body to medical research/education?

*If you choose burial:*

- Would you choose to be buried in a coffin or other receptacle, and if so what type? Would you want to purchase it ahead of time?

another meeting or who spend part of the year in another location. For those living full-time in another location a personal letter at least yearly is suggested, with a message of kindly interest and inquiry into the Friend's religious life and activities. When appropriate, members should be advised of the advantages of transferring membership to a meeting in their immediate neighborhood or, if their absence is temporary, of becoming sojourning members in such a meeting. If, following outreach, no information is forthcoming from a member for a number of years, the monthly meeting may consider the membership to have lapsed.

For some non-resident members, attending a meeting is not possible due to distance, transportation limitations, or other extenuating circumstances. In these cases, it is especially important for the meeting to maintain regular contact with the absent member so that their spiritual connection with, and support from, the home meeting can be maintained.

### *Dual Membership*

New England Yearly Meeting recommends against a Friend holding membership in two different faith communities.

Membership in the Religious Society of Friends, at its best, expresses a settled recognition that this is the best framework to allow one's spiritual and temporal life to flourish. It is a commitment to God and to the other members of the Meeting, in covenant relationship.

If an individual requests membership in the Religious Society of Friends, and at the same time wishes to retain membership in another tradition, to have dual membership, it is important for their clearness committee to explore with them their reasons for this and its implications. The same is true when a member of the Religious Society of Friends wishes to join another church and wants to retain their meeting membership. It is essential in each of these situa-

tions for a clearness committee to question whether the individual's desire to be in a formal membership relationship with two faith traditions indicates a lack of clarity regarding their spiritual path and its expression. The clearness committee may well inquire if there are creedal aspects of the other faith which conflicts with Friends' understanding of continuing revelation. In addition, there may be obligatory outward sacraments that contradict Friends witness that the sacraments are not a necessary vehicle to access the inward spiritual reality. Dual membership implies that an individual intends to commit fully and formally to the covenant responsibilities and spiritual understandings of two different religious traditions. Through membership, one is taking on the commitment of contributing to the life of the religious community not only through attendance at worship, committee work, and financial support, but also in the care, concern and responsibility for the other members and the children of the community.

#### *Affiliation with Other Faith Communities*

It is understood, and accepted, that many Friends in New England today have come to Quakerism from other spiritual traditions and often bring with them deep ties to that heritage. These Friends often continue to participate in these traditions when visiting family or at times of specific religious celebrations. The acknowledgment of these gifts from their ethnic or religious heritage, need not disturb their commitment and witness as Friends.

There are also Friends who find ongoing inspiration in the wisdom and devotional practices of various Christian churches, as well as other religions. This enriches their spiritual lives and brings that enlivened spirit to their meeting. Since the early days of the Quaker movement, Friends have recognized the unity of those who witness to the Light within their chosen religious traditions. Friends encourage members to expand their understanding of the spiritual

## Appendix 7: Dying, Death and Bereavement

### 7A. Health Care Decisions, Legal Documents and Financial Information

Friends are strongly advised to make their final arrangements well in advance remembering death does not always wait until we are old. Make sure those close to you understand your wishes and know where to find the necessary information. Meetings can help by having packets of the necessary forms available, periodically encouraging Friends to fill them out and, if desired, providing a lockbox at the meeting house in which to keep copies of completed forms. The more details are written down ahead of time, the more easily survivors can act upon your wishes. Do not hesitate to add details to the ones suggested below.

#### *Some Suggested Documentation:*

- *Health care advance directives:* These are available online for each state or from your local hospital. Are these current and up to date? With whom have you discussed your wishes?
- *Will or trust information:* List the names and phone numbers of those who have any written documents, and where the documents are kept.
- *Organ donation:* Have you made the choice to be an organ donor? Do you carry documentation with you?
- *Durable power of attorney for health Care (DPA/HC):* Write down the contact information of whoever has documents, and where your copy is kept.
- *Durable power of attorney for your estate:* contact information

4. Do I know what to do when the death of a loved one occurs? Am I prepared to support the choices they make?
5. Do I know that I need not be alone in grief, and that I might share it with others? Am I willing to seek support when I need it?
6. Am I willing to be present to other Friends when they are grieving, to offer practical and spiritual support, making myself available as needed or wanted?

insights of other religions through reading and participation as led and to seek the ways in which Friends can unite with them. Members are also encouraged to bear witness to Friends' distinctive spiritual path and contribute their understanding to the spectrum of religious experience.

### *Lapsed Membership*

Many Friends who have grown up in meetings, or been active members of a meeting, understand themselves to be Quakers long after they have ceased to be active with Friends in any way. It is not a denial of this spiritual identity for a meeting to acknowledge that the individual is no longer a participating member of the Quaker community. Meetings should engage sensitively with such members, letting them know that the meeting believes that their membership has lapsed. In such a case, Ministry and Counsel recommends to the monthly meeting that it remove the name from the membership rolls. The meeting may encourage them to remain in contact with the meeting and with Friends. Such individuals may apply for membership in the future if so led.

If for a number of years the meeting has been unable to sustain a relationship with a member over the age of twenty-five, it may consider the membership to have lapsed.

## **Transfer or Removal of Membership**

### *Transfer*

Membership in good standing is transferable from one monthly meeting to another, unless either meeting has discerned for weighty reasons that transfer is not advisable. Members transferring to and from another yearly meeting should become familiar with the book of *Faith and Practice* of the new yearly meeting. Transfer may be requested for personal reasons after careful consideration, or it may be due to relocation. Transferring membership after one relo-

cates encourages one to engage fully with the new meeting. A letter of transfer from the original meeting is sent to the clerk of the new meeting, recommending the member to the care of the new meeting. When the letter is received, Ministry and Counsel appoints a clearness committee to consider the request for the transfer and to acquaint the member with the spiritual life of the new meeting. There is wide diversity among Friends and care should be taken that both the meeting and the new member are aware of how this diversity might be present in the new relationship. When the membership transfer is accepted by the new meeting the member is formally welcomed into the new meeting. An adult who is a birthright member in another yearly meeting will transfer as a member. A child who is a birthright member will transfer as an associate member. An adult who is a member by parental request may apply for adult membership to their home meeting before transferring or may apply for adult membership in the new meeting. (See Appendix 4D for a full description of the process and a sample transfer certificate.)

### *Resignation of Membership*

Members wishing to resign their membership in the Religious Society of Friends should put the request in writing to the clerk of the meeting. Where appropriate, the meeting may reach out to the individual and offer to convene a committee to visit the member in a spirit of loving care to be clear concerning the cause of the resignation. While a resignation may be a sign of alienation from the meeting, some Friends may simply grow in a direction that makes membership in a different religious body right for them. The meeting may grow from understanding and considering the reasons for a member's resignation. Resignation of membership from the monthly meeting also signifies resignation from the Religious Society of Friends. The meeting drafts a minute accepting the Friend's resignation with a copy of the minute sent to the individual.

than an uncritical “yes” or “no” (*North Carolina Yearly Meeting [Conservative] 1983*)

### *Queries for Meetings:*

1. How does the meeting invite learning about, discussion of, and preparation for end-of-life issues, at both a practical and a spiritual level?
2. Does the meeting want to offer a place to file final choices for its members or biographical material which might be useful in preparing memorial minutes?
3. How might the meeting support individuals, families, and the meeting as a whole, as each grieves, not only in the near future, but over time?
4. When death happens in a disturbing way, is the meeting a place where Friends know they can express difficult emotions and share together as needed?
5. Has the meeting considered the need for a burial/ memorial committee to stay current with the state laws and with the choices available? If the meeting has a burial ground, does it have clear guidelines for its use and an accurate record of who is interred? (See Appendix 7G)
6. Has the meeting considered whether it is able to support those considering options that will hasten death?

### *Queries for Individuals*

1. Am I fearful of death, or of dying, and how might these fears be faced?
2. How does my faith inform my understanding of death? Am I living in the Eternal?
3. What insight and wisdom do I have to pass on to the next generation?

2. Prepare for the end of life while you are able. Remember that infirmity and death can come unexpectedly. Advance planning is a gift to those left behind.
3. Advance planning is particularly important when care of dependent children needs to be considered.
4. Do not burden your heirs with decisions about possessions that could have been made through thoughtful preparation.
5. Clearly stated wishes regarding dispersal of property, heirlooms, and other family treasures may help to avoid pain and conflict.
6. Be aware that grieving is normal, is painful, and has no defined time limit. Be open to God's love and the love of Friends, knowing that there are those willing to walk with you. When it is another's turn to grieve, remember to support that person in whatever ways are helpful, with imagination and care.
7. Stay close to the Inward Guide as you navigate your own and family expectations and sensibilities around death.
8. Make a regular practice of prayer and dependence on the Divine so that in times of urgent need, you may more easily find your way to the embrace of the Spirit.
9. When visiting a person who is dying, or a person who is grieving, take care to keep the focus on that person, rather than on one's own feelings and responses to the person's condition. Be equally careful when speaking to that person's family or caregivers.

Although Queries may often be answered with a simple affirmative or negative, it is vital to ask corollary questions such as "why", "how", or "when." A qualified answer arising from introspection is more meaningful and constructive

### *Discontinuance of Membership*

Discontinuing a Friend's membership may be considered when the conduct or publicly expressed opinions of the member are so much at variance with the principles of the Society that the spiritual bond has been broken. Friends may find that for this person to continue to be considered a member carries with it a lack of individual and/or corporate integrity.

There may come a time when the meeting community can no longer live with the spiritual or human costs of maintaining a relationship with such a member. While the meeting does have significant responsibility to work with the person via support committees, clearness committees, counseling, and individual personal contact, the meeting cannot sacrifice itself for the preservation of the membership relationship with any one individual.

Much responsibility falls to Ministry and Counsel in times of such difficulties. The quarterly and/or yearly meeting Ministry and Counsel may be called upon for support and resources. Often these resources provide emotional and spiritual support for those within the meeting who are working to restore or maintain the unity of the meeting community and are working to provide pastoral care for the individual.

Within the meeting, the work needs to be done in a way that honors both the member in question and the members of the community. The final decision to discontinue membership is a meeting decision and must be made in a meeting for business after sufficient work within the community to be sure that everyone understands the process and the purpose. It is important that personal support be offered to the individual whose membership is being discontinued during this process in whatever way is acceptable, and that the individual be kept fully informed when such a meeting is being held.

It may also be possible to continue to care for the individual after membership is discontinued by working with the person's community and family outside of meeting, making sure support systems are in place if they are needed.

A Friend whose membership has been discontinued by the monthly meeting may, if dissatisfied with the decision, file an appeal within one year with the quarterly meeting for a review of the matter. If either the Friend whose membership is in question, or the monthly meeting concerned, is dissatisfied with the decision of the quarterly meeting, an appeal may be addressed to the Permanent Board of the Yearly Meeting. The decision of the Permanent Board is final.

One whose membership has been discontinued may subsequently apply for membership in the usual manner, after one year.

### **Extracts on Membership**

1. Membership is still seen as a discipleship, a discipline within a broadly Christian perspective and our Quaker tradition, where the way we live is as important as the beliefs we affirm. Like all discipleships, membership has its elements of commitment and responsibility but it is also about joy and celebration. Membership is a way of saying to the meeting that you feel at home and in the right place. Membership is also a way of saying to the meeting and to the world, that you accept at least the fundamental elements of being a Quaker: the understanding of divine guidance, the manner of corporate worship and the ordering of the meeting's business, the practical expression of inward convictions, and the equality of all before God. In asking to be admitted into the community of the meeting you are affirming what the meeting stands

the purest ways I know to “answer that of God in everyone.” It is not about having an answer or solution, but simply being there, and being there fully.

“Birth, death, and other big hard things.”  
 Lisa Graustein, personal communication, January 2019

### **Advices and Queries**

#### *Advices for Meetings*

1. Encourage one another to acknowledge the reality of death and come to a greater understanding of dying.
2. Remember the power, strength and comfort of both collective and individual prayer for those who are dying or who are bereaved.
3. Support those going through the process of dying, death and grieving. Help them to realize and express their wishes for the memorial meeting. Be sensitive to the needs of family, friends, and the meeting.
4. At times the need of the dying person for privacy conflicts with the caregivers' and the family's need for support. Be mindful of the ways information is shared within the meeting. Use discretion and discernment.
5. Make resources available on the practical, emotional and spiritual aspects of dying, death, and bereavement.
6. Be mindful of the ongoing support needed for those whose needs may be invisible: the very ill who are unable to come to meeting, caregivers, and those grieving.

#### *Advices for individuals*

1. Remember that death is an integral part of the fabric of life rather than an evil to be avoided at all costs. God is ever present.

ger, in those moments, for me, than my experiences of God.

When I fought to maintain my mother's comfort as her organs were rupturing in a medical system that had forgotten to treat her like a person, when I tried to pump life back into the dead body of my student, when I stood over my 3-day-old child in the NICU, willing him to live, the only grace I was given was that I was able to stay present to my mother, my student, and my child. I felt everything I was feeling *and* stayed present. Only one of those three people is still alive and I didn't walk out of those experiences unscathed. To the best of my ability to understand it, God was with me in supporting me to be present to what was happening, in all its horror, and that that presence is what allows me to heal after each of these experiences. I have not returned to the person I was before these moments, but, for the most part, I have been able to release the all-consuming fear and rage and hold those moments for what they were—horrible, traumatic, sad, and life-altering.

We carry trauma and grief in our bodies, no matter what sense our minds and psyches make of it. I have worked with enough survivors to know that sometimes the trauma is so great, that disassociating is the way our beings can best survive the horror we endure. And I also know that people who can identify even one person with whom they can talk about their trauma, are far more likely to heal. My understanding of this is also about presence—that when we bear witness to another's pain, we shift some of that pain and offer a space for healing.

I do not know what of my presence my mother and student could feel or know. We can not always create the reality we want for each other; we can always be present to the reality another is facing. This is one of

for and declaring your willingness to contribute to its life.

### Britain Yearly Meeting 1995

2. Membership is a covenant relationship, a commitment both to God and to a community. People in a covenant relationship are bound together by love, answerable to each other for their words and actions. There are mutual expectations in a covenant: trust, open communication, forgiveness, participation, and perseverance in the face of differences.

### Draft of Illinois YM F&P 1999

3. [M]embership is simply a rite of passage in that [life-long] process of [transformation], the moment of adult declaration that this is the church structure, this is the spiritual community within which we feel called to live out the process of our spiritual maturing. This is the trellising that best supports the growth of our interior relationship with God and our exterior relationship with the world. These are the people with whom we will live out the vicissitudes of our inner and outer lives. Worthiness has nothing to do with membership. God has already accepted us in our imperfection and is loving us forward toward a more perfect image of God's self. The real issue in membership is commitment on the part of both the meeting and the applicant to remain faithful to the development and requirements of the process within Quaker tradition.

### Patricia Loring 1999

4. The test for membership should not be doctrinal agreement nor adherence to certain testimonies but evidence of sincere seeking and striving for the Truth, together with an understanding of the lines along which Friends are seeking Truth.

### Friends World Conference 1952

5. I felt so at home among Friends that I realized I had actually been one for a long time without realizing it. It never occurred to me not to ask for membership, but the process—clearness committee, the whole works—forced me further on: I had to consider issues that, like it or not, needed to be wrestled with. For me, the main wrestling match was with the Peace Testimony—a bout which is not over. (I keep running into Hitler and the Holocaust, and it's still a matter of "I believe. Help thou my unbelief.")

**Marnie Miller-Gutsell 2002**

6. I resisted membership in any group for many years, feeling that it was unnecessary and that all people, of all faiths, who were trying to live based in their experience of the divine, were "the church universal." I didn't like the idea of making formal separations between us. While I experienced and still experience the informal drawing together, as if by a magnetic force, of those who are my "companions along the way" I began to feel for a group to join where I could be part of a larger communal voice and work in the world. I had been attending an unprogrammed Friends meeting for several years and had realized that this was where I "fit in" spiritually .... For me, membership is akin to marriage. It is hard to describe what the inner difference is except that it is a deeper commitment, a sense that a decision has been made and barring something which arises within the context of that commitment which threatens to be destructive to me, I will stay with it.

**Maggie Edmondson, 2002**

7. I find myself surprised, time and time again, when I hear older Friends speak with urgency about the future vitality of the Religious Society of Friends and express dismay at the lack of young adults in their

Meeting whenever she could manage it. Brian was her constant and loving help-meet.

Two months before she died, Betty made the decision to enter hospice, and once her decision was made and shared, she lived into it with openness, humility and grace, and one could even say hospitality.

"Welcome what is" released her into all that life was to her at the moment: all the love and all the pain, living in what Friend Bill Taber called "The cross of joy."

**Excerpt from memorial minute for Elizabeth Poynton, Worcester Meeting 2019**

15. We don't get to control some of the most significant moments in our lives—birth, death, and events that may be physically and emotionally traumatic. What we do get to do is say what we need, offer the support we can give, and invite God to sustain us and help us be present to what is happening.

As someone who carried and gave birth to my child, shepherded my mother through ALS and her death, and has sat with many families grieving the loss of a child to suicide, gun violence, or other sudden deaths, I know there is not always grace, there is not always mercy, and things don't go as we would want. There is always, however, our capacity to endure, to be present, and to draw on God's strength when we feel ourselves past the point of endurance and past our capacity to be present.

So many times ... I wanted to stop, to check out, to tune out, to walk away. The pain—physical and emotional—was too much. In each case, I chose to stay present. It was hard and I often questioned where God was at all, particularly when a young person I loved had been gunned down. The anger and horror and all-consuming rage I have felt at times were big-

13. Not Knowing What to Expect

*Not Knowing what to expect  
I would never pack light  
For trips to the West*

*Shoes were the worst;  
Of course I'd want my work boots  
Because that is who I am  
But I'd also want my Bean  
Boots, in case of mud.  
And some slip-ons for around the house*

*I'd want some shoes easy to  
Put on and take off in the  
Airport (pack my pocketknife in the luggage)*

*Not knowing what to expect  
I'd want to pack my computer and some music  
And a book of puzzles in carryon*

*There's a trip I'll be taking soon  
Without an overhead bin I need to  
Unpack. I won't be able to take anything with me.*

*Still, not knowing what to expect  
It's hard to pack light  
For a trip to the unknown.*

**Edward Baker, written April 2017,  
six months before his death**

14. "For the last couple [of] years, the phrases often on her lips to describe her journey were statements of hope and faith: "Welcome what is" and "All will be well." She lived into these words.

Though she lived in a great deal of pain her last year, she was unlikely to mention it except in passing. She made [an] effort to be present to people and to the

meetings. If Friends are committed to addressing these concerns and not simply wringing their hands, perhaps it is time to explore new approaches to membership with the needs of the younger generations in mind. If the monthly meeting structure is frequently less relevant to the "next generation" of Friends, then is it wise to use monthly meeting membership as the primary measuring stick by which we gauge the health and vitality of our faith community? Quakerism is vibrant and thriving in many worship groups and Quaker colleges, to name two examples, yet our declining membership statistics fail to take these groups into account and thus paint a rather grim picture of our future. Perhaps we can envision a more optimistic landscape if we let go of our historical attachment to monthly meeting membership as the locus of all meaningful Quaker community?

**Emily Higgs 2012**

8. Our membership of this, or any other Christian fellowship is never based upon worthiness .... We are none of us members because we have attained a certain standard of goodness, but rather because, in this matter, we still are all humble learners in the school of Christ. Our membership is of no importance whatever unless it signifies that we are committed to something of far greater and more lasting significance than can adequately be conveyed by the closest association with any movement or organization.

**Edgar G. Dunstan 1956**

9. In describing our own religious experiences, we should use words which liberate rather than words which imprison the spirit. Jesus said, "I am the way." He did not say, "I am the End of the road." We say to an applicant for membership: "We expect you to have a belief, but we do not require you to accept a particular statement of belief. You need not have for-

mulated a full theology, and you need not subscribe to a particular theology, but you must be sincerely seeking Truth. We expect you to be a humble learner in the School of Christ. We hope you will study the Scriptures and we hope you will try to formulate your beliefs, but you need not have arrived at Truth, what we ask is that you be sincerely seeking Truth.”

**Thomas Bodine 1985**

10. Convincement is that moment when the idea of being a Quaker becomes a lived reality of being a Quaker, in which the Quaker way comes into the heart and finds a home and makes a nest and settles. It's a subtle, subtle thing, but it's everything also. It's everything. When Jesus said, "I am the way," my understanding of that is that when we come to Spirit and we say "yes" and we allow Spirit to be in us, we live in the world in a different way, and it becomes our way of being.

So I am now a Quaker. I am a member of this tribe and I'm committed to its health. But every time that I say yes to something there's a new level, a new arena, a new something that I'm ready to learn that God is calling me into, and there is a deeper connection to Spirit.

So when I first came into the Religious Society of Friends, I was not conscious of the need to work on issues of racism, but recently I have become convinced that that is a part of my piece in this fellowship. And I don't even know what it is are the future pieces of convincement that need to happen in me that I need to be open to.

And, so, yes, I'm a Quaker but I'm not yet fully the Quaker that I might be. And it's when I stop and say "Been there, done that, its over" that I think I stop being a Quaker. And I need to, maybe, become convinced again.

**Walter Hjelt Sullivan 2015**

the hallway evaporated. It felt like being in meeting for worship, when the gathered center down and it's just us and the Light of God, losing ourselves in a blessed silence. For a moment it was as if Glenn and I were lifted up and held in peace.

**Geoff Knowlton 2017**

12. Grief is a holy madness. It is not a puzzle to be solved, a problem to be overcome, or a situation to be managed. It is a wilderness we wander in search of the sacred—an absent other, a missing self. No one can take this wilderness from us, and no one should. You who grieve, stay away from people who want you to get over it fast. They don't know that the work you're doing is holy ...

“The Truth must dazzle gradually/Or every man be blind—,” Dickinson wrote. Grief is just as dazzling. It is a madness that makes divinest sense. The truths it reveals cannot be known all at once; they must be seen on the slant of time.

One of the most powerful truths I learned was that the loftiest part of myself was always on duty. It was present despite the chaos, within the chaos. Present wherever I wandered, whatever I found: snake or squirrel, bee or bone, rock or razor.

In the place I call North, I felt found, rescued, met, known, led, righted, given to, bestowed upon, inspired—all words claimed by religious tradition. What do you call this place? What is its center? For me, North is the soul's magnetic pole; the divine is its compass, nothing less.

**Patricia McKernon Runkle 2017**

that she was still part of the circle actively holding something more than herself.

**Maggie Edmondson 2016**

10. She (my sister) reminded me that Quaker faith was not written down; it was lived, and I was living it. I was trying to find answers in books and histories that weren't meant to provide guidance. The answers would only come from me being present in the light, and living my faith.

So I put the books down. I thought back over the past few days as my father lay dying. And there I saw my faith. My father was surrounded by his family: his three daughters, his brother and sister, and his best friend of 37 years. He was never alone. Even as he began to fade in and out, we were present on his behalf and holding him in the Light. Some people prayed; others held his hand. It didn't matter what we did, because we all loved ... and God was with us... This was going to be a sad time, horribly sad, but it should not be horrible. And it wasn't; instead, it was filled with a kind of light I had never experienced before: somber and soft. ... When my father slipped from this world, the entire family gathered around him. In retrospect, it strikes me how much this process was like a meeting for worship. In the silence, his brother, sister, and best friend told stories about his life. We opened ourselves up to our memories, and our sorrow. We cried but we also laughed. It was our way of holding him in the light as he began his journey. I also think it was our way of gathering ourselves and finding the light in our sorrow.

**Shannon Zimmerman 2017**

11. I sat in a bedside chair and waited. Minutes went by and after a while I didn't hear Glenn's labored breathing. The sound of machines, monitors, and people in

11. For as in one body we have many members, and not all members have the same function, so we who are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.

**Romans 12:4-5**

12. In a true community we will not choose our companions, for our choices are so often limited by self-serving motives. Instead, our companions will be given to us by grace. Often they will be persons who will upset our settled view of self and world. In fact, we might define true community as the place where the person you least want to live with always lives!

**Parker J. Palmer 1977**

13. While her children were in their infancy she had a great concern to become a member of Friends Society not only because she was fully convinced of the excellence of the principles professed by that society, but because she earnestly desired that her children should receive the guarded education Friends give theirs. She mentioned her concern to a Friend who said do not apply, you will only have your feelings wounded. Friends will not receive you. Thus admonished, and feeling that prejudice had closed the doors against her, she did not make her concern known to the Society. There was nothing but my Mother's complexion in the way to prevent her being a member, she was highly intelligent & pious; her whole life blameless.

**Sarah Mapps Douglass 1844**

14. This was the way that Friends used with me, when I was convinced of truth, they came oftentimes to visit me; and sate and waited upon the Lord in silence with me; and as the Lord opened our understanding and mouths, so we had very sweet and comfortable seasons together. They did not ask me questions about

this or the other creed, or about this or the other controversy in religion; but they waited to feel that living Power to quicken me, which raised up Jesus from the dead. And it pleased God so in his wisdom to direct, that all the great truths of the Christian religion were occasionally spoken to. Now this was Friends way with me, a way far beyond all rules or methods established by the wisdom of the world, which is foolishness with God: And this is their way with others that are convinced of the truth.

**Richard Claridge 1697**

15. My first impression of Quaker Meeting was confusion. I could not believe that people really were uniting together in practice not in dogma. It was literally incomprehensible to me, the fact that people believed different things and used different language but could be a community – and such a great community – because they shared the same set of practices, and because they came together in the same space and through that shared worship – that waiting worship – they developed a kind of sense of community and a sense of body, a sense of integration.

**Robert Fischer 2016**

16. I said to one of the Cuban Friends, “It must be hard to be a Christian in Cuba.” He smiled. “Not as hard as it is in the United States,” he said. Of course, I asked why he said that, and he went on, “You are tempted by three idols that do not tempt us. One is affluence, which we do not have. Another is power, which we also do not have. The third is technology, which again we do not have. Furthermore, when you join a church or a meeting, you gain in social acceptance and respectability. When we join, we lose those things, so we must be very clear about what we be-

while equally clothing the rest of us. So it is with dying. Someone is leaving, and friends and family are equally participating in the parting. Conscious separation has always seemed important to me, and it can be one of love’s finest moments. Of all the many kinds of love, this love may be the kindest of them all. With all of the uncertainties on the bridge between one world and another, our trusting acceptance is what really allows a loving and lasting embrace.

**Stephen Redding 2010**

9. We are used to hearing the term “centering” and I haven’t before had a really good image for how that feels, just that there is a lightness and a clarity of focus which doesn’t have words ... I was holding a sense of this when a small group of us went to have worship with Friends I will call Kate and John in their home. Kate had recently been discharged from the hospital into hospice care at home and was mostly bedridden ... As we sat together in a circle I became aware of so many other concentric circles of caring beyond us. What surprised me was that Kate was not at the center of these circles. At the center was a shining entity like a pillar, filled with its own dynamic movement, and she was one of the people who was tending this central entity. It felt that this central entity was the beautiful dance of relationship between Kate and everyone present, but especially with her husband and her daughter and all those closest to her. They were not primarily tending her; she and they together were all tending the quality of their relationship and their love for one another. I felt strongly that Kate still had work to do, the most challenging work she had ever undertaken—to tend this flame of love together with her loved ones. When I voiced this she expressed what a sense of relief it was for her to feel

7. About a dozen years ago I became critically ill and I have a vivid memory of looking down on myself on the bed; doctors and nurses worked on that body; and I felt held in such secureness, joy and contentment, a sense of the utter rightness of things—I was held in the hands of God. The crisis passed and I was filled with wonder at the newness of life ...

Can we face up to the fact of death? Can we prepare ourselves in some measure for dying? I feel I have to try and tell you of my experience and the understanding it brought me—however personal and limited. From the closeness of my own dying, I know God is. Death is not a negation of life but complements it: however terrible the actual dying, life and death are both parts of the whole and that wholeness is in God. I still fight the conventional words of “resurrection and life everlasting” but I know that after Jesus died the overwhelming certainty of his presence released his disciples from fear. I believe eternal life is in each moment of life, here and now; the real tragedy is not how or when we die but if we do not live the life we are given to our full potential.

**Jenifer Faulkner 1982**

8. One particular evening during Sue’s last days was especially striking. A few of us sat at her bedside, along with her two dogs and her son, who lay red-eyed alongside her on the bed. In conscious awareness, we of her and she of us, we were together in our letting go. Together we were packing her bags for the walk between worlds to whatever might be next for her. There was a telling instant that lifted our tired and teary eyes. With a soft giggle from her frail and translucent body, she comforted us. Sue’s presence was almost regal as she signaled her acceptance of death. That soft laugh spoke to a faith and basic trust that clothed her in comfort,

lieve and what the commitment is that we are prepared to make.”

**Gordon Browne Jr 1989**

17. Today membership may not involve putting liberty, goods or life at risk but the spiritual understanding of membership is, in essentials, the same as that which guided the ‘Children of the Light’. People still become Friends through ‘convincement’, and like early Friends they wrestle and rejoice with that experience.

**Britain Yearly Meeting 1995**

## **Membership Advices and Queries**

### *Advices to the Meeting*

1. Be clear with attenders considering membership that, while they are not expected to subscribe to specific beliefs they are choosing a spiritual path that is grounded in the guidance of the Inward Light.
2. Provide instruction and mentoring for those interested in becoming members. Learn to articulate the spiritual grounding and the responsibilities of membership. Encourage prospective members to read NEYM’s book of *Faith and Practice* and be ready to engage with them about what they read there.

### *Advices to Meeting Members*

1. Become familiar with all aspects of the meeting’s life and help each other to discern where and how it might be appropriate to become engaged.
2. Share the responsibility and privilege for the ongoing search for Divine guidance. This is fruitful both for the individual and for the group.
3. Look upon members as fellow disciples seeking Divine guidance. If you feel discomfort with the spiritual language of others, ask yourself why and help others

- explore their discomfort with yours. Authentic religious expression does not exclude those with a differing experience or differing ways of expressing it.
4. Become acquainted with the whole meeting community; share in its joys and sorrows and be willing to let the full community share in yours.
  5. Encourage one another in personal devotional practice outside of meeting for worship.

6. Turn to the One who unites us in a perfect love when as members, we meet our limitations of understanding and ability to love.

Although Queries may often be answered with a simple affirmative or negative, it is vital to ask corollary questions, such as “why,” “how,” or “when.” A qualified answer arising from introspection is more meaningful and constructive than an uncritical “yes” or “no.” (*North Carolina Yearly Meeting [Conservative] 1983*)

*Queries for the Meeting about Potential Members*

1. Are we aware and supportive of an individual who may be moving toward the commitment of membership?
2. How do we help attenders learn more about Quaker faith and practice?
3. Do we encourage seekers to find a spiritual home, whether or not it is with Quakers?
4. Do we help individuals to become familiar with and participate in the life of the meeting community?

*Queries for the Meeting about Memberships*

1. Do we understand the responsibilities of membership to offer ongoing nurture and support to each other?

peatedly, ... our task, our responsibility is to make this present life holy, consecrated, a temple of the living God, the indwelling Christ. This gives to us the power to be the people of our God, to master and conquer temptation, to order our lives by the divine principles steadily revealed to us.

Cecil E. Hinshaw 1979

6. However much death has been expected and prepared for, it is still a shock when the moment comes. This shock produces a numbness at first which is merciful. It may enable the bereaved person to carry out the practical tasks which follow a death. But it may not. If we are sensitive we will see what help the bereaved person needs ... How often we hear people say in those early days: ‘She is being marvelous’. But this stage passes, and a period of great inner chaos can follow ...

[The] loss of one’s partner can be one of the severest forms of psychological stress. The emotions can be quite overwhelming. Some say it feels like insanity ... Slowly life can be found to have meaning again, and at the heart of that meaning lies the word ‘love’. ‘Growth into true life,’ wrote one widow, ‘lies in love of one another. We have the choice of letting grief shadow our lives or growing from it.’ This healing love is beyond us and within us and continually seeks us out. Those whose privilege it has been to come right through grief know this in a deep and personal way. They can in their turn reach out to others in distress. The true meaning of the word ‘compassion’ is ‘suffering together with someone’. Perhaps they have discovered for themselves that the sense of the absence of God which came with the depression made them know how much they need God.

Diana Lampen 1979

rendered; it is not lost. Once given the vision of one's true place in the life stream, death is no longer complete or final, but an incident. Death is the way—the only way—life renews itself. When the individual has served his purpose as a channel, the flow transfers itself to other channels, but life goes on. And in this great drama of life renewed, one sees and feels the divine presence, and feels himself one with it.

Facing the possibility of death, I saw that I did not fear it. Why should I? Since life carries death with it like a seed, since this is normal, what is there to fear? The gift of life is inseparably united to the promise of death: on no other terms is life ever given. And death is a promise rather than a threat, for who would want to continue a life that is worn out?

**Bradford Smith 1965**

5. The time to think about death, most truly to face it creatively, is not when it is near, but rather when one is at the peak of one's life's energy and creativity. Certainly this was the attitude of early Friends. Of course they knew death would come, but in the reading of thousands of the pages of the writings and journals of early Quakers, I have been impressed by how little concern the journal writer expressed for her or his own death or for what would happen after death. This is all the more remarkable when one remembers how common death was in those times, how central it was in most thought, and that the religions contemporary with Quakerism heavily emphasized the transition at death from physical life to heaven, hell, or purgatory, and each religion promised the best road to heaven. Instead, Quakers, quietly placing their faith in the God they worshipped to handle all that happens after human death, concentrated their energy and their faith on the living of a holy life. For as Fox says re-

2. Do we value, support and maintain connections with all our members?
3. Are we living as a spiritual community under Divine guidance?

*Queries for Individuals Considering Membership*

1. Why do I want to be a member of the Religious Society of Friends? What does membership mean to me?
2. Am I actively engaged in nurturing my spiritual growth?
3. How do I take responsibility for the spiritual vitality of the meeting?
4. What part does meeting for worship play in my life?
5. What is my understanding of the spiritual foundation of Quaker worship and of Quaker business process?
6. What role does being a member of the Religious Society of Friends play in my relationship with the Divine?
7. Am I familiar with New England Yearly Meeting's book of *Faith and Practice*?
8. To what extent have I become acquainted with the meeting community and what experiences have I shared with them?
9. Do I trust the community to help me discern a leading? Do I participate in the discernment processes of the meeting?
10. Am I willing to be vulnerable with meeting members and deal tenderly with their vulnerabilities?
11. In what ways do I demonstrate my commitment to the meeting community and to the Religious Society of Friends?

## Appendix 4: Membership

### 4A. Process for Joining a Friends Meeting

1. A person desiring membership in a Friends meeting initiates the process by writing a letter to the meeting, addressed to the clerk of the meeting.
2. Adult members may request that their children be accepted as associate members.
3. The clerk reports receipt of the letter at the next business meeting, and refers the letter to the appropriate committee of the meeting, usually Ministry and Counsel. The clerk may withhold the name of the applicant if the applicant wishes or if it is the practice of the monthly meeting.
4. The committee which receives the membership request appoints a clearness committee to meet with the applicant.
5. After having met with the applicant as many times as necessary, the clearness committee reports back to this committee. In the case of potentially competing affiliations such as dual membership these matters should be resolved before reporting back.
6. If the recommendation is that the applicant be accepted into membership, this recommendation is reported to monthly meeting for business.
7. If the clearness committee finds that the applicant is not yet ready for membership, the clearness committee reports this to the committee that appointed it. That committee may choose to extend the process.
8. Occasionally the group may reach clarity that membership in the Society of Friends is not the Spirit's leading for an applicant. If both the committee and

3. *The following experience relates to the death of his son Lowell at the age of 11, while Rufus Jones was on a visit to England in 1903.*

The night before landing in Liverpool I awoke in my berth with a strange sense of trouble and sadness. As I lay wondering what it meant, I felt myself invaded by a Presence and held in Everlasting Arms. It was the most extraordinary experience I had ever had. But I had no intimation that anything was happening to Lowell. When we landed in Liverpool a cable informed me that he was desperately ill, and a second cable, in answer to one from me, brought the dreadful news that he was gone. When the news reached my friend John Wilhelm Rowntree, he experienced a profound sense of Divine Presence enfolding him and me, and his comfort and love were an immense help to me in my trial...

I know now, as I look back across the years, that nothing has carried me up into the life of God, or done more to open out the infinite meaning of love, than the fact that love can span this break of separation, can pass beyond the visible and hold right on across the chasm. The mystic union has not broken and knows no end.

Rufus Jones 1947

4. And so comes the next opening—the sense of being part of a universe, of a personal relatedness to all life, all growth, all creativity. Suddenly one senses that his life is not just his own little individual existence but that he is bound in fact to all of life, from the first splitting off of the planets, through the beginning of animate life and on through the slow evolution of man. It is all in him and he is but one channel of it. What has flowed through him, flows on, through children, through works accomplished, through services

## Burial

Early Friends followed simple burial practices and often had no grave markers. Many options are available today with or without the services of a funeral industry professional. Some meetings have a burial ground, or a memorial garden for cremated remains, and some have a standing burial committee to help guide families through the burial and memorial process.

## Extracts

1. I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor powers, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Epistle to the Romans 8:38–39**

2. [D]eath is no more than a turning of us over from time to eternity. Death then, being the way and condition of life, we cannot love to live, if we cannot bear to die.

They that love beyond the world cannot be separated by it. Death cannot kill what never dies. Nor can spirits ever be divided, that love and live in the same divine principle, the root and record of their friendship. If absence be not death, neither is theirs. Death is but crossing the world, as friends do the seas; they live in one another still. For they must needs be present, that love and live in that which is omnipresent. In this divine glass they see face to face; and their converse is free, as well as pure. This is the comfort of friends, that though they may be said to die, yet their friendship and society are, in the best sense, ever present, because immortal.”

William Penn 1693

the applicant remember that the goal is clearness that allows faithful action, then this outcome can be seen as a positive one. The clearness committee reports this to the committee which appointed it. That committee reviews the decision and brings its recommendation to the business meeting.

9. If the monthly meeting for business accepts the applicant into membership, the action is minuted and the applicant's name is submitted to the meeting recorder who will add it to the meeting's records.
10. The clerk of monthly meeting writes a letter to the new member, acknowledging the action of the monthly meeting for business and welcoming them into membership
11. The new member is welcomed into the meeting.

## 4B. Writing a Request for Membership

The letter requesting membership might include statements of:

1. Your desire to become a member.
2. How you came to the decision to request membership.
3. Your understanding of the spiritual grounding and aspirations of the Religious Society of Friends now and in the past. (This can be brief.)
4. Your willingness to meet with a clearness committee for membership.

## 4C. Suggested Topics for the Meeting of the Applicant and the Membership Clearness Committee

Below are suggested topics to be addressed. Many of them will occur naturally in the course of conversation and are not meant as an examination, nor is it expected that there

are “right” or “wrong” answers. The value of these topics lies in what they may reveal of experiences of the Spirit of both the applicant and the members of the clearness committee. Sufficient time should be allowed to ensure mutual understanding and trust. The discussion should take place unhurriedly in the spirit of a common search and seeking for clearness on the part of both the applicant and the clearness committee.

Sometimes the membership clearness committee may feel an individual is not ready for membership. It is important to recognize when this is the case and equally important to continue to provide pastoral care to nurture the individual’s progress on their spiritual journey. This may include suggestions for religious education opportunities, spiritual companionship, counseling, or other necessary assistance.

1. *Process of clearness.* What is your understanding of the process of coming to clearness?
2. *Spiritual journey.* Describe your spiritual journey. What is your experience and understanding of the Spirit? What role does it play in your life? How do you anticipate that membership in the meeting and in the Religious Society of Friends will affect this journey?
3. *Quaker history and experience.* What is your understanding of Quaker history and experience? What is your own experience of following the Inward Light as guide rather than relying on worldly authority? Have you found the collective experience and insights of Friends helpful in developing your own understandings?
4. *Quaker diversity.* Are you aware of the diversity of language and theology used by Quakers to describe basic Friends’ principles? Can you be comfortable with both Christian and universalist language when it

choosing an alternative to the services of a professional funeral director (in states where this is legal) it is very helpful to have the support and assistance of one’s community.

If the meeting has a memorial or burial committee, it should be familiar with the legal requirements, which vary from state to state, and be ready to help Friends follow the burial protocols with simplicity and dignity, and to assist in filing the appropriate paperwork.

## Memorial Minutes and Memorial Meetings

Memorial minutes and memorial meetings are valued spiritual practices of Friends. The memorial minute testifies to the grace of God as revealed in the life of a Friend, while the memorial meeting for worship is a time to give thanks for that grace. The minute recounts the life, distinctive qualities and contributions of the Friend who has died. It may include excerpts from an individual’s pre-written spiritual autobiography or other writings. When there is time for it to be written before the memorial meeting, parts of it may be read aloud during the worship. Often it is written later and may reflect ministry that has arisen in the memorial meeting.

While early Friends remembered the deceased during a regular meeting for worship, it is more common now to schedule a separate time. It is important to be aware of the needs both of the family and of the meeting, especially if the family is not acquainted with Quaker forms of worship. In some instances two services may be held to accommodate both the family and the meeting. Members are encouraged to attend a memorial meeting whether or not the person who died is someone they knew well. Honoring a life in this way may help family members and the meeting through this difficult time of transition. (See Appendices 7C, 7D, and 7E for guidance on writing memorial minutes and conducting memorial meetings.)

flow of communication and exploration of these topics before such events occur. The meeting, or a memorial committee, can encourage advance decision-making by holding discussions on such topics as durable power of attorney, advance directives, eldercare, hospice, wills, and burial options, and by keeping a file of Friends' final wishes as described above. This helps to relieve much stress when death occurs. When the meeting community is prepared and engaged, it can be a meaningful source of solace, comfort, and strength for a dying person, caregivers, and others affected by a death. As members of the meeting share this experience, they may grow in their own spiritual understandings of death and in their capacity to meet difficult experiences with love. Many meetings have regularly scheduled times to share the joys and sorrows of the community, inviting prayer and practical assistance. Meetings can also offer support to the dying as well as the bereaved with a clearness or support committee. (See Pastoral Care section.) As with all pastoral care, it is important for the meeting to gauge the scope of its ability to provide assistance.

Should a cause of death present particular challenges to the meeting, such as a death by violence, additional support for the community may be needed from Friends beyond the monthly meeting. At times, a number of meetings may need to uphold one another through times of grief following tragedies in the wider world, such as mass shootings or catastrophic events such as earthquakes. They may wish to join with other faith communities in mourning such events.

At the time of death, Friends should assist the family in whatever ways they can, such as help with children, with food or housework, or with hospitality for visiting relatives. If prior planning has not been done, the meeting may be asked to assist a family in making decisions regarding disposition of their loved one's body and, if there is no family, consider doing this service for the deceased Friend. When

is used to describe a spiritual experience? Can you be open to the experience that lies beneath the words?

5. *Testimony and witness.* Do you find yourself in harmony with the way the Spirit has consistently born testimony in the lives of Friends throughout our history? To what can you testify from your own experience? How has this affected your witness? How have you been affected by the meeting's expressions of testimony?
6. *Quaker faith and practice.* How familiar are you with Friends' faith and practice? Are there some aspects which are particularly meaningful to you? Are there some that you find confusing or with which you do not connect?
7. *Contributions to the meeting community.* How are you involved in the life of the meeting? How do you hope to grow within and contribute to the community? What is your commitment to the meeting community and to the Society of Friends as a whole?
8. *Living in spiritual community.* Along with the joys and benefits of living in a spiritual community come potential hardships, disagreements and incompatibilities. Are you ready to address such difficulties with love and with an open heart? Are you aware of the contemporary struggles within the meeting and among Friends?
9. *Quaker decision-making.* Have you participated in the monthly meeting for business or served on a meeting committee? Do you understand how Friends make decisions?
10. *Organizational structure of the Society of Friends.* Do you understand the interdependence among monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings? Are you open to participating in these bodies?

11. Other affiliations. Are you affiliated with other religious organizations? How do those affiliations affect your involvement in and commitment to the meeting?

#### **4D. Suggested Procedure for Transfer of Friends Membership within the Society of Friends**

*For the Friend who wishes to transfer membership:*

1. When a relationship with a new meeting has been established, the Friend desiring to transfer membership applies to the clerk of the meeting of which they are a member for a Certificate of Transfer to the new meeting.
2. At the same time, the Friend writes to the clerk of the new meeting indicating that a request for transfer has been made.

*For the meeting from which a transfer is being made (the originating meeting):*

1. Upon the clerk's receipt of a request for transfer of membership, the clerk refers the request to the appropriate committee of the meeting.
2. If there are no obstructions or difficulties, this committee recommends to the monthly meeting that the transfer be approved. If there are problems, this committee will attempt to resolve them or report back to the clerk the circumstances blocking their way.
3. Approval by the monthly meeting for business is required for completion of the transfer.
4. The clerk or recorder completes two copies of the Certificate of Transfer, sending one to the receiving meeting, along with a copy of the Acceptance of Transfer, and keeping one for their own records. (The originating meeting is obligated to inform the receiving meeting

perhaps witness pain and suffering, and realize their loss has already begun. While death involves grieving by family and friends, depending on circumstances, the grief may be mixed with gratitude, a sense of completion and rightness, or a sense that something sacramental has happened. It is also possible that the dying and the death will be traumatic, and there will be need for loving friends and family to actively support the bereaved. Sudden or violent death can pose further challenges, beginning with a period of shock during which the bereaved person's basic needs must be addressed.

Whatever the circumstances, death can be a complex and stressful time for families, and negotiating family expectations and sensitivities can benefit from spiritual support. This is especially important when a bereaved person has been unable to celebrate the life of their loved one with others, either because of geographical distance, estrangement, or the decision not to hold any kind of funeral or memorial service.

Grief is a process of healing. It is not linear, even though it has stages, and it has no time limit. The acute pain may dissipate, but it may resurface at unexpected intervals. Other feelings may arise: anger, regrets, and unresolved issues. Loss of a loved one changes the shape of one's world, even when the loss has been foreseen and comes at an expected time. There may be a permanent sense of absence. Not only one's feelings, but one's very sense of identity and one's roles in life may change. There is an alchemy involved in entering fully into grief, a process whereby feelings of despair and sorrow are accepted, fully experienced and transformed.

#### **Meeting Responsibilities**

Preparing for the eventuality of illness, aging, dying, and death of oneself or one's loved ones is eased by an open

At times there are difficult decisions to make about death: for example, whether or not to terminate an unplanned or complicated pregnancy, whether to end one's own medical treatment, or whether to stop a person's life support. Friends may want to gather with a clearness committee for discernment at such times.

Taking the time for advance planning, including planning for costs, when one is still in good health is an act of love for those who will be left behind. It allows for careful consideration of one's own wishes, as well as time for conversation with loved ones about what they need and want. It also relieves loved ones of worry about details when grief is fresh and may be overwhelming. Discussing choices surrounding death with family members helps avoid later struggles and disagreements. Making sure that those responsible know the whereabouts of important information will facilitate what they need to do. Meetings may offer to keep copies of members' final choices on file at the meeting-house.

Formal documentation may include advance directives, a will, a list of important contacts, the location of personal documents and passwords, a draft obituary, plans for a memorial service, and choices concerning type of burial, organ donation, possible donation of the body for research, and other specifics about treatment of the body. Organizing one's papers and possessions while one is able is a gift to all concerned. In addition, Friends may wish to consider writing ethical wills to leave a legacy of those non-material things that were important to their lives, such as their spiritual beliefs, guiding principles, and cherished family stories. (See Appendices 7A and 7B.)

## **Bereavement**

When death is anticipated, grief begins early as those who love and care for someone watch the progress of the illness,

ing of any special condition or problems experienced with a transferring member.)

5. The clerk or recorder retains one copy of the Certificate of Transfer.
6. If reply from the receiving meeting is not received in due time, another copy of the Certificate of Transfer may be made and inquiry sent to the receiving meeting.
7. When the Acceptance of Transfer is returned by the receiving meeting, a copy of the member's meeting membership record is sent to the receiving meeting, thus completing the interchange. The clerk or recorder appends the copy of the Acceptance to the meeting membership record for that member and files those documents in whatever manner the records of "former members" are preserved. The Friend remains a member of the originating meeting until the new meeting has minuted acceptance in their monthly meeting for business. The date of that meeting marks the official change and is so reported to the Yearly Meeting through the annual statistical report.

### *For the receiving meeting:*

1. The clerk receives the member's letter of intention to transfer membership. When the Certificate of Transfer and the partially completed Acceptance of Transfer are received, the clerk acknowledges them, in writing, and reports it to the next meeting for business. The clerk then forwards the request to the appropriate committee (usually Ministry and Counsel).
2. This committee appoints a clearness committee, at least one of whom serves on the committee with responsibility for membership. They explore with the transferring member such matters as are necessary in order that there be common understanding of the new relationship. If the committee finds clearness,

it reports to the appropriate committee, which then makes its recommendations to the next monthly meeting for business.

3. When the committee recommends acceptance of the Certificate of Transfer to the monthly meeting for business, and the meeting accepts the recommendation, the meeting minutes its decision regarding the acceptance of the Friend as a member. With acceptance, that minute records membership in the new meeting as of that date.
4. The clerk furnishes the member with a copy of the approving minute.
5. The clerk completes the Acceptance of Transfer and makes a copy of it.
6. The clerk or recorder sends the copy of the Acceptance of Transfer to the clerk of the member's originating meeting.
7. The Certificate of Transfer and the original Acceptance of Transfer become the meeting's membership record. The recorder preserves them in the meeting's file of current members. The meeting may receive a copy of the meeting membership record from the old meeting. This is not an official record and may be stored in whatever manner the meeting holds background information about its members.
8. When all business has been satisfactorily completed, the meeting should make arrangements to welcome their new member.
9. The new member is included in the meeting's next statistical report.

*Note:* Meetings vary in how they distribute responsibilities of the clerk and recorder. To avoid unnecessary delay or

Those providing care are likely to have major responsibilities for physical needs, overseeing medical and financial decision-making, coordinating communication with family and friends, and providing emotional support. All these require much energy and stamina. At the same time the caregivers may be experiencing emotional turmoil. It is normal to swing between hope and fear as symptoms change, to feel drained and tired, resentful, scared, angry, overwhelmed or sad as well as to feel tender and loving. Caregivers may experience frustration, physical revulsion, and rage against what feels like an injustice. As they provide support, caregivers, in turn, need to receive support.

While accompanying some people as they die may prove inspiring and reassuring, that is by no means always the case. Staying present to the person may be challenging when the manner of death is difficult. There may be anger or even horror, and one may profoundly disagree with the dying person's choices. Remember the vital importance of dependence on the Spirit for guidance, comfort, and strength beyond one's own resources.

## Death

While it is helpful to all involved to plan and make decisions, death can happen in unexpected ways over which one has no control, and for which there has been no preparation<sup>5</sup>. Accidental death, violent death, miscarriage, death of a child at any age, and death by suicide all challenge one's ability to accept and understand. One's faith as well may be sorely tested. Not only the individuals involved, but the whole meeting may need to process and grieve together.

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- 5 If a death occurs outside of a hospice or medical setting, particularly if unexpected or unattended, it needs to be reported immediately.

be made about whether to receive pain management only without looking for a cure<sup>1</sup>, whether to enter hospice care<sup>2</sup>, to refuse food and drink<sup>3</sup>, or to choose physician assisted death in states where it is legal<sup>4</sup>. In making these decisions, it is valuable to include family and friends, and perhaps a clearness process with members of the meeting. Any decision made by the patient inevitably affects others who are close.

When dying happens over a period of time, support for caregivers is as important as care for the one who is dying.

- 1 *Palliative Care*: Care that focuses on relieving the symptoms, pain and stress of serious illness. A patient does not need to be terminal to receive palliative care. Palliative care patients often continue full treatment for their illness while in a palliative care program.
- 2 *Hospice Care*: Terminal illness care at home or in a hospice facility. Care is focused on alleviating pain and helping patients prepare for the end of life. Instead of treating the illness, hospice nurses and other medical professionals work to ensure the patient's physical comfort and emotional peace. Hospice is designed to minimize medical intrusion and maximize a patient's ability to enjoy what time he or she has left.
- 3 *VSED (Voluntary Stopping of Eating and Drinking)*: An intentional decision to stop drinking liquids and eating food—for the specific purpose of causing death. It causes death by dehydration, usually within seven to 14 days. While it may not require governmental action or physicians' authorization, care should be taken to consult the specific laws of one's state.
- 4 *PAD—Physician Assisted Death*: The practice where a physician prescribes a potentially lethal medication to a terminally ill, suffering patient at their request that they can take (or not) at a time of their own choosing to end their life.

confusion, each meeting will prosper by clarification of these tasks.

## 4E. Forms for Transfer of Membership within the Society of Friends

### Certificate of Transfer

[Meeting letterhead and date]

To \_\_\_\_\_ Monthly Meeting of Friends

Dear Friends:

This is to certify that \_\_\_\_\_ [a member/members] of this Meeting [has/have] requested a certificate transferring membership to your Meeting. Upon due inquiry, no obstruction appears to granting this request. We therefore commend [him/her/them] to your [Christian/spiritual] care. Please acknowledge receipt of this certificate and acceptance of the transfer by completing and returning to the clerk, the annexed statement.

Signed by direction and on behalf of \_\_\_\_\_ Monthly Meeting of Friends, held at \_\_\_\_\_, State of \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ [month] 20XX.

\_\_\_\_\_, Clerk  
Address \_\_\_\_\_.

### Acceptance of Transfer

To \_\_\_\_\_ Monthly Meeting of Friends

Dear Friends,

We have received the transfer certificate issued by you on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20XX and have accepted \_\_\_\_\_ into membership with us.

Signed by direction and on behalf of \_\_\_\_\_  
 Monthly Meeting of Friends, held at \_\_\_\_\_, State  
 of \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ [month],  
 20XX.

\_\_\_\_\_, Clerk

#### **4F. Sojourning membership**

There may be times when a Friend will spend a period of time attending a meeting at some geographical distance from their home meeting, with the intention of ultimately returning to the meeting where they are a member. If the member wants to become involved in the meeting which they are attending, the member may request that their home meeting send a Minute of Sojourn to the meeting with which they want to be involved for the period of their stay. This Minute of Sojourn commends the member to the meeting of their sojourn, asking that they be welcomed into the new community for the duration of their stay.

If the Sojourning Member becomes involved with the new meeting, it is traditional that the Meeting of Sojourn send a letter to the home meeting when the period of sojourn is finished, returning care of the member to the meeting from which they came.

#### **4G. Transfer of membership to a church outside the Society of Friends**

##### **Request for Transfer**

To the \_\_\_\_\_ Church, city, state.

Dear Friends,  
 \_\_\_\_\_, [a member/members]  
 in good standing in this Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, [has/have] expressed the desire to become [a

an after-life, but on how one can embody that realm in the present.

Birth and death are parts of the natural order of creation. A given life span is only one fleeting but precious part of the life of the universe. What precedes and follows it becomes part of a larger spiritual context. Birth, life, and death are complementary parts of the cycle of life anchored in the Spirit.

#### **Dying**

Dying may happen in an instant or may be prolonged, but anticipation of dying may affect anyone. Until one directly faces death for oneself or for loved ones, there is much that is unknown. Sharing experiences of being with someone who is dying may help confront and allay some fears. It also offers the chance to explore spiritual questions together and to offer comfort to each other.

For those who are in the process of dying, it may be important for them to talk about their fears, regrets, or emotional and financial concerns for those being left behind. Sometimes there is vital work of forgiveness of oneself or others to be done. One may mourn what will be left undone, or that which will never now be experienced.

There can be a sense of release from fear when a person relinquishes the fight against disease and accepts their coming death, a release that leaves room to embrace the stretch of life that remains. Just as it is common to give thought to the birthing experience, some people give thought to the experiences surrounding death such as who might be present or choosing comforting music or readings.

When one is a patient, there may be medical choices that affect one's dying and death. Not only are there choices of what course of treatment to accept, there are also choices to

## Dying, Death, and Bereavement

### Presented at the 2019 NEYM Annual Sessions Given Preliminary Approval August 7, 2019

One rarely knows how death will arrive, either for a loved one or for oneself. Will death come through injury, illness, old age? Will it come quickly or slowly? Will there be warning? Each death is unique, and may not come at the end of a long life. Yet, each life, whether short or long, is whole and precious.

Early Friends recognized the passage into death as a liminal space in which a person might be particularly conscious of the Eternal. It was common for friends and family to gather to hear the testimony of the dying person. While this rarely happens in a formal way now, many still find deep openings sitting with a dying person whether in silence or in conversation, and even when they are with a person who is unconscious, distressed, or wrestling with great pain.

Keeping a sense of sanctity and care around death may present a challenge. Many aspects of the modern world distance us from death. Deaths are often outside the home, or far away geographically from loved ones. Certain aspects of death, such as medical care or funeral arrangements, are usually handled by others, leading to less engagement with the physical reality of death than in former times. At the same time, the still common experience of mass deaths from war, or other violence, may lead one to objectify death as remote and unreal.

What happens beyond life is a mystery, but Friends trust it is part of a universe sustained by Divine Love. Friends' witness is that one may live in God's realm in the present. As such, life choices are made not in hopes of heaven in

member/members] of your Church. We have considered this request and there appears to be no obstruction to granting it. We therefore recommend [him/her/them] to your care. Their membership in this meeting of the Religious Society of Friends will end when we receive acknowledgment of your acceptance of this transfer.

Signed by direction and on behalf of \_\_\_\_\_  
Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, held  
at \_\_\_\_\_, State of \_\_\_\_\_, the  
\_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20XX.

\_\_\_\_\_, Clerk  
Address \_\_\_\_\_.

### Acceptance of Transfer

To \_\_\_\_\_ Monthly Meeting  
of Friends

We have received the letter issued by you on the  
\_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20XX, and have accepted  
\_\_\_\_\_ into membership with us.

Signed on behalf of \_\_\_\_\_ Church,  
on \_\_\_\_\_ [date]

\_\_\_\_\_  
[Signature] \_\_\_\_\_ [Title]

### 4H. Discontinuance of Membership

The monthly meeting records the discontinuance of a membership in its records and sends a copy of the pertinent minute to the individual involved.

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