

1 **Draft Text on Dying, Death and Bereavement**

2 **Presented at the 2018 NEYM Annual Sessions**

3  
4 1. None of us knows how we are going to die, or when we might expect the death of  
5 a loved one. Will death come through illness, injury or old age? Will it come quickly or  
6 slowly? Will we have warning? Each death is unique, and not everyone dies easily at  
7 the end of a long life. Each life, whether short or long, is whole and precious.

8  
9 2. Accepting our mortality helps us embrace life and appreciate all its gifts. We can  
10 understand death as part of the natural order of creation, evoking a sense of wholeness  
11 and ease with our finite place in the universe. A sense of the spiritual dimension of life  
12 puts death in a broader context, as we open our hearts to a reality which transcends the  
13 here and now. We do not know what comes after death; it is a mystery, but we trust in  
14 a universe sustained by Divine Love. Our witness is that we already live in God's  
15 realm. We do not base our life choices on possible consequences in an afterlife, but on  
16 what will embody that realm in the present.

17  
18 3. When early Friends referred to the eternal, this was as an aspect of the present, a  
19 challenge to more worldly values. Early Friends saw the period of dying as a liminal  
20 space in which one is peculiarly conscious of the Eternal. It was common for Friends  
21 and family to gather to hear the testimony of a dying person.

22  
23 4. Nowadays, Friends may find it harder to stay in right relationship with their own  
24 mortality and that of others and make space for that sense of the Eternal. Being present  
25 at the deaths of our loved ones may not be possible because of geography or  
26 hospitalization. Also, we live in a culture which distances itself from the realities of  
27 death. One of the ways in which we do that is through dependence on the funeral  
28 industry rather than caring for the bodies of our loved ones ourselves after death, as  
29 was the custom in earlier times. Our doctors often see death as a medical failure and  
30 concentrate on prolonging life. People tend to avoid talking about dying while at the  
31 same time death is graphically shown on news media and in entertainment media. It  
32 becomes easy to objectify it as remote and somehow unreal. But living and dying are  
33 complementary parts of the cycle of life in which we are anchored in the Spirit.

34  
35 **Dying**

36  
37 5. For many of us it is the process of dying we fear, rather than death itself. We can  
38 prepare ourselves for the experience of dying, our own or that of someone else, by

1 understanding some of the physical, psychological and spiritual elements of this  
2 experience. Raising the topic of death, and asking others about their experiences of  
3 being with someone who is dying, can help to confront and transform that fear. One  
4 can face the fact that there are many ways death arrives, not just one predictable or  
5 expected way. Such conversations also offer the chance to explore spiritual questions  
6 together. When facing death, one may need to talk about fears, regrets, and concerns  
7 for those being left behind. Sometimes there is vital work of forgiveness of self or of  
8 others to be done. Some who are dying, have said that once the fear of death is faced, it  
9 fades away, leaving room to fully live and appreciate the last part of life.

10  
11 6. Support for a caregiver is as important as care for the one who is dying. They are  
12 likely to be sustaining major responsibilities for practical care, overseeing medical and  
13 financial decision-making, coordinating communication with family and friends, and  
14 providing emotional support. All these require much energy. At the same time the  
15 caregiver may be experiencing private emotional turmoil. It is normal to swing between  
16 hope and fear as symptoms change, to feel drained and tired, resentful, scared,  
17 overwhelmed, and sad, as well as tender and loving. As the caregiver provides support  
18 to the dying relative, close friend, or spouse, that person in turn needs nurturing.

## 19 20 **Death**

21  
22 7. While it is helpful to all involved to make choices and plan, death can happen in  
23 unexpected ways over which one has no control, and for which there has been no  
24 preparation. Accidental death, violent death, miscarriage, death of a child at any age,  
25 and death by suicide, all challenge our ability to accept or understand.

26  
27 8. At times there are very difficult decisions to make concerning death - whether or  
28 not to end a pregnancy, choosing to forgo food or medical treatment which would  
29 prolong one's own life, choosing to hasten one's own death in the face of pain and  
30 suffering under "death with dignity" laws. Reaching out to one another for support can  
31 help with such discernment.

32  
33 9. Taking the time for advance planning when one is still able is an act of love for  
34 those who will be left behind. It allows for careful consideration of what one's own  
35 wishes are, as well as time for conversation with loved ones about what they need and  
36 want. It also relieves them of worrying about details when grief is fresh and may be  
37 overwhelming. Formal steps may include: advance directives, a will, a list of important  
38 contacts, the location of personal documents and passwords, a draft obituary, plans for  
39 a memorial service, and choices concerning organ donation and disposal of the

1 body. It is important to discuss these choices and the whereabouts of important  
2 information with family members. Meetings may also keep members' Final Choices on  
3 file.

4

## 5 **Bereavement**

6

7 10. Death involves grieving by family and friends although, depending on  
8 circumstances, this may be mixed with gratitude, a sense of completion and rightness,  
9 or a sense that something sacramental has happened. Grief sometimes begins early as  
10 those who love and care for the individual watch the progress of the illness, perhaps  
11 witness pain and suffering, and realize their loss has already begun. When the death  
12 occurs, there are more emotions. The pain of those close to the deceased needs to be  
13 held tenderly. It can be a complex and stressful time for families, and negotiating  
14 family expectations and sensitivities can benefit from spiritual support. This is  
15 especially important when a bereaved person has been unable to celebrate the life of  
16 their loved one with others, either because of geographical distance or the decision of a  
17 family member not to hold any kind of funeral or memorial service. Loss of a loved one  
18 may change the shape of our world, even if it has been foreseen and comes at an  
19 expected time. Not only one's feelings, but one's very sense of identity and one's roles  
20 in life may change.

21

22 11. It helps to remember that grief is a process of healing. It is not linear, even  
23 though it has stages, and it has no time limit. The acute pain may dissipate, but it may  
24 resurface at unexpected intervals. Other feelings may arise: anger, regrets, and  
25 unresolved issues. There is an alchemy involved in entering fully into grief, a process  
26 whereby feelings of despair and sorrow are accepted, fully experienced and  
27 transformed. The grief does not go away, and one's life is never the same, but a new  
28 perspective can be found where gratefulness and even joy can enter in. Being present to  
29 those who are bereaved may be of the greatest help.

30

## 31 **Meeting Responsibilities**

32

33 12. The meeting community may be a meaningful source of solace, comfort, and  
34 strength for those affected by a death, if the community is prepared to be fully  
35 present. Even as members of the meeting share in the experience of the bereaved, so  
36 they too will transform and grow in their spiritual understandings of death and the  
37 capacity to meet difficult experiences with love. Many meetings have a time to share the  
38 joys and sorrows of the community. Meetings can also offer support to the bereaved  
39 through a clearness or support committee process. Preparing for the eventuality of

1 illness, aging, dying, and death of oneself or one's loved ones is eased in the context of  
2 an open flow of communication and exploration about these topics before such events  
3 occur. Meetings can facilitate an individual's advance decision-making process by  
4 holding discussions on such topics as eldercare, hospice, advanced directives, wills and  
5 burial options.

6  
7 13. A valued spiritual practice of Friends is to hold memorial meetings and to write  
8 memorial minutes. Shortly after a death the meeting helps organize the memorial  
9 meeting. As the time for planning a memorial meeting arrives, it is important to be  
10 aware of both the needs of the family and those of the meeting. If the family is not used  
11 to Quaker ways, flexibility is needed in order to meet their needs. In some instances a  
12 second memorial meeting may be held so both family and meeting needs may be met.  
13 Early Friends held a simple memorial meeting for the departed Friend during a regular  
14 meeting for worship. Burials were simple, often without markers. A memorial minute  
15 testifying to the Grace of God in the life of the Friend was written – a practice Friends  
16 continue today. A memorial minute celebrating the spirit, life, and contributions of the  
17 individual, may reflect ministry that has arisen during the memorial meeting, include  
18 excerpts from an individual's pre-written spiritual autobiography or other writings, and  
19 sometimes is written in consultation with other meetings of which the individual was a  
20 member. (See appendix for guidance on writing memorial minutes and conducting  
21 memorial meetings.)

22  
23 14. Some meetings have a burial ground, a system of green burial, or a memorial  
24 garden for ashes. Meeting clearness and pastoral care committees (described in the  
25 pastoral care section) can also support the individual through the stages of illness,  
26 dying, and death. The meeting may have a burial committee to assist Friends in  
27 choosing and carrying out their final wishes with dignity and simplicity. Should a  
28 cause of death present particular challenges to the meeting, such as a death by violence,  
29 additional support for the community may be needed from Friends beyond the  
30 monthly meeting.

1  
2  
3 **EXTRACTS**

4 **Dying**

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

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

19 **Jenifer Faulkner, 1982**

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

24 So I put the books down. I thought back over the past few days as my father lay  
25 dying. And there I saw my faith. My father was surrounded by his family: his three  
26 daughters, his brother and sister, and his best friend of 37 years. He was never alone.  
27 Even as he began to fade in and out, we were present on his behalf and holding him in  
28 the light. Some people prayed; others held his hand. It didn’t matter what we did,  
29 because we all loved. And as all Quakers know, God is love, and God was with us.  
30 Friends from his meeting stopped by to see him and ask what they could do. He simply  
31 asked that they hold us all in the light. When he became too ill for visitors, some Friends  
32 met separately or worshiped alone on our behalf. My sister reminded us that death is a  
33 heartbreaking but natural and normal thing. This was going to be a sad time, horribly  
34 sad, but it should not be horrible. And it wasn’t; instead, it was filled with a kind of  
35 light I had never experienced before: somber and soft.

36 ...Looking to my past Quaker experiences to try to understand death, I had been  
37 overlooking my current experience as a Quaker. Being a Quaker doesn’t stop, and

1 neither had my Quaker education. I learned about how Quakers experience death  
2 because I journeyed alongside someone who was dying, and rested in the silence of  
3 those who journeyed with me.

4 ... When my father slipped from this world, the entire family gathered around  
5 him. In retrospect, it strikes me how much this process was like a meeting for worship.  
6 In the silence, his brother, sister, and best friend told stories about his life. We opened  
7 ourselves up to our memories, and our sorrow. We cried but we also laughed. It was  
8 our way of holding him in the light as he began his journey. I also think it was our way  
9 of gathering ourselves and finding the light in our sorrow.

10 **Shannon Zimmerman, 2017**

11  
12 3) Each family made decisions based on their understanding of the human  
13 condition—physically and spiritually. Each family made the decision as a family,  
14 looking to one another for wisdom and support. Each family sought to discern the  
15 wishes of their loved one, the wishes of one another, in such a way that their loved one  
16 was still respected and treated with dignity. The decision to maintain life, or to end it,  
17 was done thoughtfully, emotionally, and spiritually. The families walked away  
18 from ICU knowing they acted with integrity.

19 ... when someone is faced with imminent death, the best gift we can give anyone  
20 is our presence, our undivided presence. Use those active listening skills you've  
21 mastered over the years, and make that person the center of your universe. You don't  
22 have answers to the hard questions—no one does. You don't know why they became ill.  
23 You don't know why people suffer. You don't know that everything is going to be all  
24 right, because it might not be. Living and speaking with integrity means that you admit  
25 to the person or persons that you don't have the answers, but you're happy to be with  
26 them at this time. You don't know what's going to happen, but you're willing to be with  
27 them when it does. Don't be afraid to look people in the eyes and cry with them when  
28 they cry. Don't shove tissues at them because their crying makes you uncomfortable  
29 and you want them to stop. That's an example of sympathy. An empathetic person  
30 allows their friend to cry until they want to finish, and maybe shed a tear with them as  
31 well.

32 **Susann Estle, 2017**

33  
34 4) We are used to hear the term "centering" and I haven't before had a really good  
35 image for how that feels, just that there is a lightness and a clarity of focus which  
36 doesn't have words.

37 ...I was a holding a sense of this when a small group of us went to have worship  
38 with Friends I will call Kate and John in their home. Kate had recently been discharged  
39 from the hospital into hospice care at home and was mostly bedridden. During the

1 week I had felt increasingly concerned about what seemed like a chaos of activity that  
2 was set in motion following Kate’s diagnosis and the need to set up for her needs  
3 during these final weeks of her life. So much felt like triage. Had anyone really had  
4 time to stop and consider what was most important? Was it to do everything possible  
5 to care of Kate at home or was there something more important that might be freed up  
6 if her basic needs were being met in a professional setting and her family and close  
7 friends were freed to concentrate on the quality of the time they had left with one  
8 another?

9         As we sat together in a circle I became aware of so many other concentric circles  
10 of caring beyond us. What surprised me was that Kate was not at the center of these  
11 circles. At the center was a shining entity like a pillar, filled with its own dynamic  
12 movement, and she was one of the people who was tending this central entity. It felt  
13 that this central entity was the beautiful dance of relationship between Kate and  
14 everyone present, but especially with her husband and her daughter and all those  
15 closest to her. They were not primarily tending her; she and they together were all  
16 tending the quality of their relationship and their love for one another. I felt strongly  
17 that Kate still had work to do, the most challenging work she had ever undertaken – to  
18 tend this flame of love together with her loved-ones. When I voiced this sense she  
19 expressed what a sense of relief it was for her to feel that she was still part of the circle  
20 actively holding something more than herself.

21 **Maggie Edmondson, 2016**

22  
23 5) One particular evening during Sue’s last days was especially striking. A few of  
24 us sat at her bedside, along with her two dogs and her son, who lay red-eyed alongside  
25 her on the bed. In conscious awareness, we of her and she of us, we were together in  
26 our letting go. Together we were packing her bags for the walk between worlds to  
27 whatever might be next for her. There was a telling instant that lifted our tired and  
28 teary eyes. With a soft giggle from her frail and translucent body, she comforted us.  
29 Sue’s presence was almost regal as she signaled her acceptance of death. That soft laugh  
30 spoke to a faith and basic trust that clothed her in comfort, while equally clothing the  
31 rest of us. So it is with dying. Someone is leaving, and friends and family are equally  
32 participating in the parting. Conscious separation has always seemed important to me,  
33 and it can be one of love’s finest moments. Of all the many kinds of love, this love may  
34 be the kindest of them all. With all of the uncertainties on the bridge between one world  
35 and another, our trusting acceptance is what really allows a loving and lasting embrace.

36 **Stephen Redding, 2010**

37  
38  
39

1 **Death**

2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38

6) 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. I or, as Fox says repeatedly, 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**

7) ...(D)earth 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**

8) 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.

**Romans 8: 38-39**



1 9) In view of the triumphant attitude Christianity takes toward death, it is strange  
2 that most of us avoid it as a topic of conversation. If we are not afraid of death, we seem  
3 to be afraid to speak of it. Yet death is as natural as life, and one is the counterpart of the  
4 other. If we cannot speak freely of death, we cannot speak freely of life....

5 The first natural response to death is fear. That is about as far as ever I got when  
6 death seemed a possibility during flights over the Pacific when motors stopped  
7 working. Yet death is a certainty we all face. We usually refuse to face it for ourselves  
8 until something forces us to. Then, strangely, the response is not fear any longer but  
9 acceptance, even contentment. So long as there is no predictable end to life, one forces  
10 himself to the fullest in the achievement of whatever goal or goals he has set himself.  
11 But when death appears as a certainty, such forcing seems foolish. You can relax, take  
12 time to drink in all that is beautiful, listen to all the music your soul longs for, make  
13 your own music, read the books you have longed to go back to, let nature sink in  
14 through every pore, spend more time with those you love, and ease the string to your  
15 bow so that living loses its tenseness but not its joy.

16 Thus death opens the door to life, to life renewed and re-experienced as a child  
17 experiences it, with the dew still on it. And so comes the next opening – the sense of  
18 being part of a universe, of a personal relatedness to all life, all growth, all creativity.  
19 Suddenly one senses that his life is not just his own little individual existence but that  
20 he is bound in fact to all of life, from the first splitting off of the planets, through the  
21 beginning of animate life and on through the slow evolution of man. It is all in him and  
22 he is but one channel of it. What has flowed through him, flows on, through children,  
23 through works accomplished, through services rendered; it is not lost. Once given the  
24 vision of one's true place in the life stream, death is no longer complete or final, but an  
25 incident. Death is the way – the only way – life renews itself. When the individual has  
26 served his purpose as a channel, the flow transfers itself to other channels, but life goes  
27 on. And in this great drama of life renewed, one sees and feels the divine presence, and  
28 feels himself one with it.

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

34 **Bradford Smith, 1965**

35  
36 10) I sat in a bedside chair and waited. Minutes went by and after a while I didn't  
37 hear Glenn's labored breathing. The sound of machines, monitors, and people in the  
38 hallway evaporated. It felt like being in meeting for worship when the gathered center

1 down and it's just us and the Light of God losing ourselves in a blessed silence. For a  
2 moment it was as if Glenn and I were lifted up and held in peace.

3 **Geoff Knowlton, 2017**

4

## 5 **Bereavement**

6

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

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

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

22 **Rufus Jones, 1947**

23

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

30 [The] loss of one's partner can be one of the severest forms of psychological  
31 stress. The emotions can be quite overwhelming. Some say it feels like insanity...

32 ...Slowly life can be found to have meaning again, and at the heart of that  
33 meaning lies the word 'love'. 'Growth into true life' wrote one widow, 'lies in love of  
34 one another. We have the choice of letting grief shadow our lives or growing from it.'  
35 This healing love is beyond us and within us and continually seeks us out. Those whose  
36 privilege it has been to come right through grief know this in a deep and personal way.  
37 They can in their turn reach out to others in distress. The true meaning of the word  
38 'compassion' is 'suffering together with someone'. Perhaps they have discovered for

1 themselves that the sense of the absence of God which came with the depression made  
2 them know how much they need God.

3 **Diana Lampen, 1979**

4  
5 13) Grief is a holy madness. It is not a puzzle to be solved, a problem to be overcome,  
6 or a situation to be managed. It is a wilderness we wander in search of the sacred – an  
7 absent other, a missing self. No one can take this wilderness from us, and no one  
8 should. You who grieve, stay away from people who want you to get over it fast. They  
9 don't know that the work you're doing is holy.

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

13 One of the most powerful truths I learned was that the loftiest part of myself was  
14 always on duty. It was present despite the chaos, within the chaos. Present wherever I  
15 wandered, whatever I found: snake or squirrel, bee or bone, rock or razor.  
16 In the place I call North, I felt found, rescued, met, known, led, righted, given to,  
17 bestowed upon, inspired – all words claimed by religious tradition. What do *you* call  
18 this place? What is its center? For me, North is the soul's magnetic pole; the divine is its  
19 compass, nothing less.

20 **Patricia McKernon Runkle, 2017**

## 21 22 23 **ADVICES AND QUERIES**

### 24 25 **Advices for Meetings**

- 26 1. Encourage one another to explore understandings and ways of coming to  
27 acceptance of death.
- 28 2. Remember the power, strength and comfort of both collective and individual  
29 prayer for those who are dying or who are bereaved.
- 30 3. Be sensitive to the needs of family, friends, and the meeting in supporting the  
31 processes of dying, death and grieving, including when planning the memorial  
32 meeting. Be mindful of the ways information is shared with the meeting, using  
33 discretion and discernment in sharing private communication.
- 34 4. Support end-of-life experiences by offering meeting programs which explore the  
35 practical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of dying, death and bereavement.  
36

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33

**Queries for Meetings:**

*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”*

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? Might the meeting offer to maintain a file of “Final Choices” for its members and biographical material which might be useful in preparing memorial minutes?
2. How might the meeting continue to support individuals, families, and the meeting as a whole, as each grieves, not only in the near future, but over time?
3. When death happens in a disturbing way, is the meeting a place where Friends know they can process together as needed?
4. Has the meeting given thought to the possibility of having a burial committee?
5. If the meeting has a burial ground, does it have clear guidelines for its use?

**Advices for individuals**

1. Remember that death is an integral part of the fabric of life. Learn to face your own mortality and that of your loved ones.
2. Prepare for the end of life while you are able. Advance planning is a gift to those left behind and particularly important when care of minor children needs to be considered.
3. 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 the journey with you. When it is another’s turn to grieve, remember to support that person in whatever ways are helpful, with imagination and care.
4. Stay close to the Inward Guide as you navigate family expectations and sensibilities around death.

1 **Queries for Individuals**

2

3 1. Do I live as one who is “prepared to die”? Am I fearful of death, or of dying, and  
4 how might these fears be alleviated? Am I living in the Eternal, as best as I am  
5 able?

6 2. How does my faith inform my understanding of death?

7 3. What insight and wisdom might I pass on to the next generation?

8 4. Do I know what to do when the death of a loved one occurs? Am I prepared and  
9 confident?

10 5. Am I open to knowing that I need not be alone in grief, and that I might share it  
11 with others to the extent to which I am comfortable? Am I willing to seek support  
12 when I need it?

13 6. Am I willing to be present to other Friends when they are grieving, to offer  
14 practical and spiritual support, making myself available as needed or wanted?

15 7. When I am visiting a person who is dying, or one who is grieving, am I careful to  
16 keep the focus on that person, rather than on my own feelings and my own  
17 response to the person’s condition? Am I equally careful when speaking to that  
18 person’s family or caregivers?

19

20

**Related Appendices:**

21

7A, 7B and 7C : advance planning

22

7C and D: planning a memorial meeting

23

7F: preparing a memorial minute

24

Related Chapter:

25

Pastoral Care: means of providing support

26

27

**APPENDIX 7: DYING, DEATH, AND BEREAVEMENT**

28

*This draft of Appendix 7 was originally published in the Interim Faith and  
29 Practice in 2014. It has not yet been fully coordinated with the new Dying,  
30 Death and Bereavement text. It will be revised and updated with your input.*

31 **7A. Health Care Decisions and Final Affairs.**

32 Friends are strongly advised to make their final arrangements well in advance

1 remembering that death does not always wait until we are old. Make sure those close to  
2 you know where to find the information. Meetings can help by having packets of the  
3 necessary forms available, periodically encouraging Friends to fill them out and, if  
4 desired, providing a lockbox at the meeting- house in which to keep copies of  
5 completed forms.

6 Friends are encouraged to fill out the following forms:

- 7 1. A Health Care Advance Directive form. These are available online for each state or  
8 from your local hospital.
- 9 2. A Will or Trust. This is especially important where provision needs to be made for  
10 minor children and also for couples who are not legally married.
- 11 3. A form with your vital statistics which will be needed at the time of your death.  
12 Such forms can be obtained from Funeral Consumer's Alliance or a variety of  
13 online sources. Some meetings have developed their own. (See Appendix 7B.)  
14

#### 15 **7B. Suggested Content for Final Wishes Form.**

16 *Personal Data:* Name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, Social Security  
17 number, location of will/trust/bequest, name, address, and telephone number of  
18 executor of will/trust.

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

#### 22 *Instructions for Final Arrangements*

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

26 Consider what your wishes are for disposal of your body or ashes: Would you prefer  
27 burial or cremation?

28 *If you choose burial:* What kind of coffin? There are many alternatives to choose from.  
29 You may wish to purchase your own ahead of time. Do you have a particular cemetery  
30 in mind? Many states have green cemeteries you may wish to investigate. Do you wish  
31 to be embalmed? This is not legally required.

1 *If you choose cremation:* Do you have a particular vessel you would like to use for  
2 containment of your ashes? Would you like you ashes scattered in a particular place? Is  
3 this a legal possibility?

4 A funeral director can handle the cremation, or the family may make arrangements to  
5 transport the body personally.

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

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

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

13 *Care of Minor Children:* Note the names and phone numbers of those your have chosen  
14 to take responsibility for immediate and long-term care of minor children. Other  
15 instructions concerning their care.

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

17 The more details written down ahead of time, the more easily survivors can act upon  
18 your wishes. Do not hesitate to add details to the ones suggested above.

19 Basic Information Which May Be Needed:

- 20 • Terminal Care Documents (Advance Directives or Living Will): Are these  
21 current and up to date? With whom have you discussed your wishes?
- 22 • Will or Trust information: List the names and phone numbers of those who  
23 have any written documents, and where the documents are kept.
- 24 • Organ Donation: Since this needs to be acted on very soon after death, it is  
25 helpful for many people to know your wishes ahead of time so those present can  
26 act promptly, especially if your death does not occur in a hospital. Have you  
27 filled out an organ donation card? Where is this located?
- 28 • Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care (DPA/HC): Write down the name,  
29 address, and phone number of whoever has DPA/HC for you, and where the  
30 document is kept.
- 31 • Durable Power of Attorney for your Estate: Name, address, and phone number

- 1 • Bank Accounts: Location of bank books, location of banks, and phone numbers
- 2 • Credit Cards: Bank name, account number, card location, phone number
- 3 • Safe Deposit Box: Location of box, location of key
- 4 • Annuities, Life Insurance Policies: Location of these documents, name and
- 5 phone number of representative or agent to contact.

## 7 7C. Practices at the Time of Death.

8 If a death occurs at home, or outside of a hospice or medical setting, be aware  
9 that there may be legal ramifications in the way that the death is reported to authorities.  
10 Each state has different regulations.

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

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

20 Meetings may appoint a burial committee to assist Friends in simple burial  
21 practices. This committee would carefully research the legal requirements, which vary  
22 from state to state, and assist families in filing appropriate paperwork. Information  
23 needed can be obtained through Funeral Consumer's Alliance. A home funeral guide  
24 for congregations and communities, *Undertaken with Love*, is available online as a free,  
25 downloadable PDF pamphlet.

## 26 7D. Planning a Memorial Meeting.

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



1 needs of the meeting.

2 In an unprogrammed meeting, a designated Friend is appointed to briefly  
3 explain how the meeting will be conducted and to invite participation of the  
4 worshipers. This Friend may begin the meeting with some information about the  
5 deceased's life. A memorial meeting in the programmed tradition will generally include  
6 readings, prayers, and music in addition to the time of waiting worship. Below are lists  
7 of considerations when planning a memorial meeting. Meetings are advised to consider  
8 what they can reasonably offer before making a commitment to a bereaved family.

9 The Memorial Meeting:

- 10 • Are there any particular wishes for readings, music, musicians, particular  
11 persons to speak, etc.? Usually someone from the meeting will be  
12 designated to open and close the meeting.
- 13 • A printed program: Ascertain whether or not the family would like a  
14 printed program and what their estimate is of the number needed. Are  
15 there special quotations or pictures to include? Would the family like the  
16 meeting to handle this or would they prefer to do it themselves?
- 17 • Refreshments: Meetings may wish to develop a protocol for dealing with  
18 this.
- 19 • What can the meeting reasonably provide? Often the refreshments are  
20 provided jointly by the meeting and family members of the deceased.
- 21 • Guest book: Does the family wish to provide one or would they like the  
22 meeting to provide it?
- 23 • Child care during the memorial service: Is the meeting able to provide  
24 child care should it be needed?
- 25 • Memorial display: Would the family like to have a display of mementos,  
26 photos, etc?
- 27 • Overnight hospitality needs: Is the meeting able to offer hospitality if it is  
28 needed?
- 29 • Logistical responsibilities: Confirm the chosen date and time with your  
30 meeting's scheduler and make sure arrangements have been made as  
31 needed for cleaning, opening and closing the meetinghouse,  
32 snowplowing, flowers, catering, and setup people.
- 33 • Assign Friends to serve as greeters, one to answer the telephone, and one  
34 to act as a guide if there are special issues around parking.

35

1 **7E. Memorial Meeting Programs.**

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

6 *A Memorial Service in the Manner of Friends*

7 On the occasion of a death, Friends hold a meeting for worship. The Memorial  
8 Meeting is a time for sharing loss and also a time of thankfulness for the life of the  
9 person for whom the memorial meeting is held. Laughter and tears are both  
10 appropriate. We reflect on the value of that life as it relates to the lives of all of us. All  
11 present share equally in this meeting. We sit quietly; at times an individual may be  
12 moved to speak, to offer prayer or a message that has come out of the silence. All are  
13 welcome to do this. Those who keep silence, as well as those who give a vocal message,  
14 participate in worship when they yield their minds and hearts to the guidance of the  
15 Spirit. Friends find that the worship is deepened by allowing silence to follow the  
16 spoken words. The meeting closes when a designated Friend offers a hand to a  
17 neighbor. This will signal all present to shake hands and greet one another.

18 In the programmed tradition an order of service may follow including such  
19 elements as Greeting and Gathering Words, Readings, Music, Prayers, Scriptures,  
20 Overview of the deceased Friend’s Life, Waiting Worship, and Parting Words. The  
21 meeting’s pastor or other designated Friend will generally open and close the meeting  
22 and offer words of transition between each element of the service.

23  
24 *The following guidance (7F) Memorial Minutes was approved*  
25 *by Permanent Board in January 2008*  
26

27 **7F. Memorial Minutes.**

28 *Writing a memorial minute*

29 The process of writing a memorial minute starts in the monthly meeting Ministry and  
30 Counsel. The committee may choose other members of the meeting to do the writing, but  
31 Ministry and Counsel should read the minute before it is presented to meeting for business.

1 *Purposes of the Memorial Minute:*

- 2 • To let Friends know the person memorialized, to help Friends benefit from the
- 3 spiritual lessons of the life memorialized.
- 4 • To comfort the bereaved family and the meeting by honoring their beloved Friend.
- 5 • To give thanks to God for Grace as expressed in the Friend's life.

6

7 *Some Do's and Don'ts for Memorial Minute authors:*

8 Don't:

- 9 • Polish the life and hold up the person as a shining example.
- 10 • Include information just because it's factual. "Served on Permanent Board, the Yearly
- 11 Meeting Finance Committee, and as Reading Clerk" needs context to inform us.

12 Do:

- 13 • Remember that memorial minutes require a tender sensitivity as well as a disciplined
- 14 focus.
- 15 • Give clearly and succinctly the flavor of the life as well as illustration of how the
- 16 person's qualities and achievements were demonstrated in his/her life among Friends.
- 17 Go far: failings, weaknesses, needs, are part of Friends gifts to us. Re- member "the
- 18 general killeth, the particular giveth life"; that's where dates and places can help. "*She*
- 19 *used her skills as a lifeguard to serve Young Friends*" is very weak, compared to "*for*
- 20 *the opening sessions of the newly united New England Yearly Meeting at Andover*
- 21 *Academy in Massachusetts in 1945, Ginny was the Senior Red Cross lifeguard for the*
- 22 *Young Friends at their swimming beach.*"

23 *Consider the following queries:*

- 24 • How does the inclusion of this information in the memorial minute reflect the
- 25 movement of the spirit in this Friend's life?
- 26 • What gifts of the spirit did this Friend bring to the meeting?
- 27 • How did this Friend's service in the Yearly Meeting reveal the light within and/or the
- 28 light in others? When we consider our spiritual journeys what part did this Friend play
- 29 in them?
- 30 • Are there meetings, institutions or individuals in the Yearly Meeting who might be
- 31 able to share with us ways in which this Friend exemplified testimonies which may not
- 32 have been foremost in interactions at our meeting? Before writing a memorial minute,
- 33 line up resources.
- 34 • Talk to people in the monthly meeting and other local meetings.

- 1 • Call the Yearly Meeting office and ask how this Friend served the Yearly Meeting
- 2 • If this Friend is a transfer, ask prior meetings.
- 3 • Talk to family.

4 Work as led. Trust that the Spirit will guide the authors to know what to include or omit and  
5 how to present facts so that truth is served.

6 Allow time for Ministry and Counsel to season the work before presenting the memorial minute  
7 to monthly meeting for approval.

8 Expect changes. The monthly meeting is likely to ask for changes. Try to be grateful for their  
9 interest.

10 Forwarding memorial minutes

11 Approval of a memorial minute in monthly meeting will include a decision on where to  
12 forward it. All memorial minutes may be forwarded to the quarterly meeting for its  
13 inspiration. However, if the Friend was active in the Yearly Meeting, the minute will be  
14 forwarded to quarterly meeting with a recommendation to forward it to the Permanent  
15 Board.

16 **7G. Bequests.**

- 17 1. When bequests are made to a Quaker institution the interests and intentions  
18 of a donor should be expressed in broad terms. A bequest should contain  
19 the fewest possible legally binding restrictions, with preferences being  
20 expressed in terms of guidance. Detailed preferences as to the  
21 administration and use of funds are likely to be more appropriate for a  
22 supplemental letter than for the bequest itself.
- 23 2. Even though the donor's wishes are stated as a matter of preference rather  
24 than as a legally binding restriction, the meeting, in accepting a bequest,  
25 feels a moral obligation to comply with those wishes as far as, and as long  
26 as, it is possible to do so.
- 27 3. If a preference is indicated in connection with a gift that the principal is to  
28 be invested and only the current income expended, it is reasonable to expect  
29 that this will be done for a number of years to come. Nevertheless the  
30 present members of the meeting do not wish to tie the hands of their  
31 successors. It is therefore expected that after a designated number of years  
32 (maybe 15) that part of the principal of a gift might be used in addition to

- 1 income. In like manner any physical property given to the meeting would  
2 be subject to examination to determine whether its continued use as  
3 originally designated is compatible with current program and conditions.
- 4 4. The meeting recognizes that the ways in which capital funds are invested  
5 often have important implications in terms of Friends' testimonies and  
6 concerns. It is expected that Friends will, on the one hand, avoid certain  
7 types of investment regardless of the expected rate of monetary return and  
8 will, on the other hand, have liberty to make some other investments  
9 involving a somewhat lower monetary return or a greater monetary risk  
10 than would be considered acceptable in a secular organization.
  - 11 5. In American society it has become common for educational buildings,  
12 philanthropic funds, and the like, to carry the name of a donor or of a  
13 person or family being memorialized. The meeting hopes that bequests,  
14 while letting such an interest be known, will leave final decisions to the  
15 judgment of the meeting.
  - 16 6. If a bequest is offered with terms plainly out of harmony with the spirit and  
17 intent of the meeting's policy and without special extenuating  
18 circumstances, the trustees are directed to notify the executor that the  
19 bequest cannot be accepted.

## 20 **7H. Burial Grounds.**

21 Meetings maintaining their own burial grounds should establish rules and regulations  
22 governing interments, the marking of graves, and keeping of records. The meeting  
23 should appoint a committee of two or more Friends to have oversight of the burial  
24 grounds and to see to the enforcement of the rules. The committee should take care to  
25 make no commitment of a plot or reservation of space in the burial ground which, in  
26 the passage of time, may permit the plot to pass from meeting control or ownership.

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

30 In establishing regulations as to grave markers, meetings should be careful to observe  
31 the principles of moderation and simplicity. Meetings without burial grounds may wish  
32 to create and maintain gardens of remembrance where members' ashes may be  
33 scattered.

34

## EXTRACT REFERENCES

- 1) Jenifer Faulkner, 'Out of the depth," *The Friend*, vol 140 (1982) pp 805 – 806, abbreviated with the author's consent.
- 2) Shannon Zimmerman, "A Quaker's Passing: My Father's Way," *Friends Journal*, August, 2017, pp. 8-10.
- 3) Susann Estle, "Integrity and the Ultimate," *Friends Journal*, Online Features: The Art of Dying, August 1, 2017. <https://www.friendsjournal.org/integrity-and-the-ultimate/>
- 4) Maggie Edmondson, from a message "At the still point of the turning world," written in 2016
- 5) Stephen Redding, "Parting Time," *Friends Journal*, March, 2010, pp. 21-23.
- 6) Cecil E. Hinshaw, "On living and dying," *Friends Journal*, August 1-15, 1979, pp. 4-5.
- 7) 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.
- 8) Romans 8: 38-39
- 9) 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 "Unpublished article" Sept 12, 1963.
- 10) Geoff Knowlton, "Beauty; Beauty Everywhere," *Friends Journal*, Online Feature: The Art of Dying, August 1, 2017. <https://www.friendsjournal.org/integrity-and-the-ultimate/>
- 11) Rufus Jones, *The Luminous Trail*, 1947, pp 163 -164.
- 12) Diana Lampen, *Facing death*, 1979, pp 9-10, 17. The order of some sentences has been changed.
- 13) Patricia McKernon Runkle "Grief's Compass: Walking the Wilderness with Emily Dickinson" Apprentice House Press 2017, pp 5, 109.