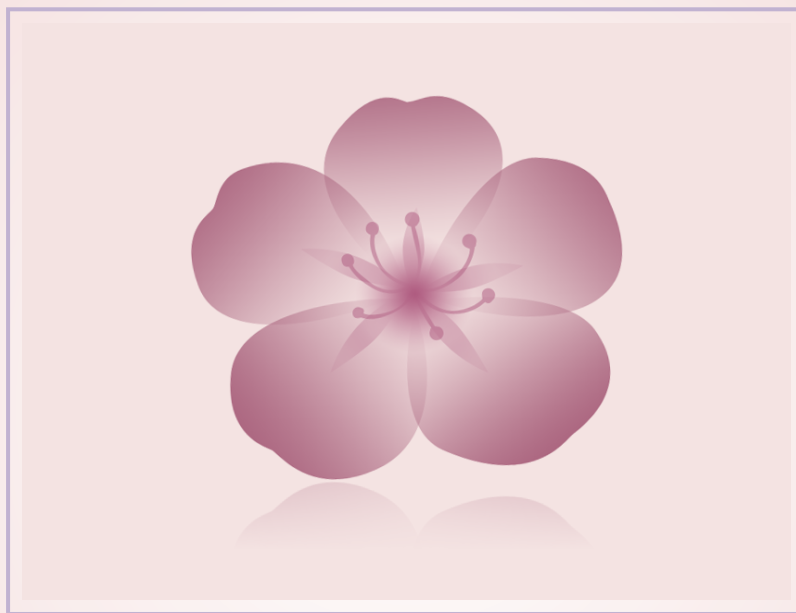


IN THE EVENT OF DEATH



A QUAKER GUIDE TO PREPARING FOR
AND RESPONDING TO DEATH



RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS
CANBERRA REGIONAL MEETING (2013)

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1. Introduction

We recognise that dying is the natural conclusion of living. Contemplating or preparing for our own death or the death of someone we love, can renew our focus on celebrating and living life fully.

It would be easy to think this is only relevant for the seriously ill or elderly, however this is an issue that could arise for people of any age.

We offer the following information (including Appendices) in the hope it may assist Friends when thinking about or preparing for their own death or when adjusting to the death of a loved one.

Appendix K is a template that is very useful to fill out while well and long before significant illness or death.

2. Reclaiming control of illness and death

So many aspects of life, including illness, dying and death, and funerals and memorial services, have become increasingly professionalised. This can result in feeling that we have little control or influence over these important and sometimes emotional parts of our lives.

We encourage Friends to have discussions with their family and possibly with close friends, about their wishes in preparation for serious illness, dying and death. We also encourage Friends to then record these wishes – a useful template is at **Appendix K**. The information in the template is required or useful for different reasons and roles:

- the family and executor
- the funeral director
- the Quaker Meeting
- to assist whoever will conduct the funeral or memorial service(s) or ceremonies

Friends are encouraged to complete the template and provide a completed copy to relevant people in the Meeting – so that we know what your wishes are when the time comes. This is a useful way of deciding and recording important information about us and our wishes - particularly in relation to our own death.

It is helpful to have chosen a funeral director before death occurs. **(See Appendix A and Appendix K)**. Page 3 of **Appendix K enables you to** list the information that is required by the funeral director after your death.

Thoughtful attention to our own wishes and the wishes of loved ones, in relation to the rituals of bereavement, particularly the funeral or memorial service, can be part of a positive healing experience for family, friends and other mourners.

Dying intestate can inconvenience family and friends, and contribute to greater confusion and upset in the event of a death. In order to prevent this it is strongly recommended that Friends make and revise their wills in times of good health and sound judgement. **Appendix K** includes advice about the location of your will.

Donating organs or tissue for donation, or your body for research

Some people may wish to arrange to make arrangements for organ and tissue donation after death. This can be a way of ensuring that your body is used for a useful and productive purpose after death. It is important that these arrangements are made before death and with the involvement and awareness of your family. The family will be asked to confirm agreement after death – before any donations are finalised.

Prior to death, wishes need to be registered with the National Donation Register - 1800 777 203 or the Organ and Tissue Donation Register at the Canberra Hospital – 02 6244 3071.

Near to death, or at death, those responsible at the Hospital will make decisions about the way forward regarding these donations. Where the person who has died has given permission for the donation of individual organs, this is normally possible only if the death occurs in hospital and provided a post mortem is not needed. The next of kin have final say in putting this into place.

Donation of Body to Medical School

Some people may wish to donate their body to the local medical school for research or other purposes. This means that there will not be a body at the funeral service. In Canberra, enquiries can be made by contacting 02 6125 9081 or anu.edu.au -search – body donation information. There are some restrictions about body donation and these should be discussed with the ANU.

At death, ANU will organise collection of body, if still applicable, from up to 200kms away free of charge. When after several years the body has served its purpose, ANU organises cremation. Ashes can be returned to family if requested – otherwise these are interred in a special memorial area at the crematorium.

3. What to do in the first days after the death of a loved one

If the death occurs at home, you will need to phone your doctor to arrange the death certificate. If there are any questions about how or why your loved one died, the police may intervene and some things may need to be delayed. The police will provide advice in those cases.

What to do on Day 1

Allow yourself and others time to adjust. There is no need to rush into action. The funeral director/undertaker does not need to be called immediately. There can be great benefit for family and friends to be able to spend time with the body to 'say goodbye'. Having the body at home may facilitate this process.

Inform immediate relatives and friends—consider in advance the most supportive way to do this. You may have a family member or two who will assist you with this process. Perhaps see if someone can ensure older or single friends and relatives are not alone when given the news. You may need some help identifying everyone who should be contacted. Don't hesitate to ask others to assist you in making sure the news is shared with others.

Consider how best to include young children and young adults. Children and young adults are sometimes not made aware of the death of a loved one and their interests or needs are not always considered in their own right. It is important to include children and young people in the process – including planning and other discussions about the deceased.

Access information and requests and any pre-arrangements prepared by the deceased person, if possible. (These wishes or details could be held by the Quaker Meeting House or funeral director or family member, or be at home on hard copy or computer file.) Check whether body or organ donation is applicable. **(See end of Appendix K).**

Agree on a person to coordinate arrangements. This person may need to mediate between different family members. The person should be flexible and not aligned with special interests. They should be a practical person. Don't forget the role could be shared. A Quaker funeral coordinator could help here if required.

Consider asking for assistance with a range of tasks – people may offer to help you and the following tasks might be useful ideas:

- housekeeping tasks including cleaning;
- answering the phone or responding to messages;
- help with child care;
- driving you to appointments or to collect or deliver friends or family;
- shopping for groceries or other needs;
- preparing food or drinks or catering for visitors or family who may visit you; or
- preparing the house for any visitors – making beds etc.

Contact the Clerk of Meeting or a church if you wish to discuss funeral arrangements or organising any support from the Meeting or church.

Contact the funeral director. Appendix K lists the information on the person who has died that is required by the funeral director.

Discuss immediate arrangements, perhaps with assistance from the Quaker coordinator and/or your funeral director:

- Do you wish to keep the body at home and if so, for how long?
- Is special care of the body necessary – eg monitoring room temperature, applying special treatments etc?
- Do you wish to offer viewing of the body to family or close friends — at home/ funeral chapel/ funeral or memorial service?
- Do you want the funeral director to arrange storage of the body while you make arrangements for the funeral/memorial service?
- If so, do you wish to use their transport (hearse) or your own?
- Even if the funeral has been prepaid, it may be possible to negotiate variation with the relevant funeral director.
- Consider if you want to purchase a coffin, make a coffin, or have a personalised coffin. **(See Appendix C).**

Decide whether flowers and/or donation to charity are an appropriate way to remember the deceased. Inform mourners through a newspaper advertisement and by ‘word of mouth’.

Discuss wording of **death notice** in newspaper (optional). (Most newspapers will only accept a notice from the funeral director.)

Check your bereavement leave entitlements and consider adding sick leave. Check with airlines re availability of preferential bookings for those relatives who now need to travel home urgently – or ask a friend to do this for you.

If you have a joint account with the person, consider withdrawing cash from that bank account before it is closed.

What to do on Day 2 to Day 4

Delegate the task of informing people to the person’s or your own personal and professional networks e.g. Meeting, clubs, organisations.

There is usually no need to rush into having the funeral/memorial service. Funeral directors will usually not charge extra for keeping the body in the mortuary should circumstances warrant this, and will assist if you wish to hold the body at home.

With the Quaker coordinator, decide on issues surrounding a funeral or memorial service **(See Appendix B):**

- burial/cremation arrangements – booking venue if necessary, funeral/memorial service format and venue;
- whether ceremonies will be public or private;

- whether you want a handout at the service - sending a copy to people who unable to attend can help them feel included; and
- whether you would like to hold a social gathering after service – where, for how many, what catering arrangements.

Delegate responsibility to separate people or groups for any of the following tasks:

- Development of a handout – selection of content, design and copying/printing;
- Organising, building or decorating the coffin – if applicable (**Appendix C**);
- Organising any music – including any requirements for playing, supporting or accompanying music;
- Organising photos, memorabilia, PowerPoint etc desired for service – this should include arranging the equipment or amenities required;
- Overseeing catering arrangements;
- Preparation or allocation of the eulogy/ies;
- Identifying and arranging ushers; and
- Identifying and obtaining agreement of pallbearers if needed

Begin to sort out legal arrangements — make an appointment with the person’s lawyer, executor(s) of their will, or trustee regarding administration of the estate.

Cancel unnecessary newspaper/ postal delivery/cleaner/home help/household services. Consider keeping cleaning if you would like the home maintained without needing to focus on it.

Inform any relevant home and health care services — equipment & medication may need to be dismantled, returned, or disposed of.

Begin to sort out financial arrangements, pension entitlements — inform banks and other authorities.

The Centrelink website www.centrelink.gov.au provides a useful list of people and organisations you may need to contact after someone dies and sample letters for informing people and organisations of a person’s death.

What can be done at any time or continuously

Include close family and friends, where possible, in consultations about arrangements. Consider ways to include the children of friends and family in the process. Children experience grief and loss and can appreciate and benefit from being involved in discussions and decisions. Having children involved can also be useful for those children to learn about and experience the natural process of grief. Discuss the process with them and answer any questions as honestly and helpfully as possible. Having children present is often a source of comfort for adults during this time.

People want to help and support you during this time. Do all you can to **accept** love, help and the grace of God, however it is expressed.

What you can do in your own time - without need to rush

Sort out the personal possessions of the person who has died. You may wish to consider giving mementos to friends and family, and clothes to charity etc. There is no need to hurry this process as having the person's possessions with you can provide comfort.

4. Funerals and Memorials

Funerals and memorial services provide an opportunity to acknowledge that a life has ended, and also to acknowledge that a life has been lived. A well arranged and conducted service can:

- celebrate and remember the qualities and the contribution of the person who has died;
- celebrate and be thankful for the grace of God in the life of the person who has died; and
- be part of a positive healing experience for the mourners.

With the support of family, friends and/or the Quaker coordinator, you can decide on whether these aims can be accomplished within the traditional Quaker format. Some Friends have partners and family members who are not Quakers and would not find comfort and support in the Quaker Meeting for Worship. However, a thoughtfully prepared Quaker meeting for worship can be very inclusive, and provide a setting in which non-Quakers find it easy to share.

Decide whether you need to modify the traditional format, or whether you wish to consider more than one service. It is possible to have a combined denominational/ Quaker service in a church or chapel or other place.

If you choose to have a Quaker services, it is useful to distribute to mourners a brief explanation about the Quaker form of service. A form is available, or this can be included in the order of service with a brief summary of who Quakers are.

Information to assist in planning a service is at **Appendix B**. It is important to note that no one is perfect and there have always been hurts to and from the person who has died. Some words relating to mutual forgiveness are always appropriate, whether from a family member or the celebrant.

Appendix A – Choosing a Funeral Director

The funeral director's responsibilities include:

- obtaining the second death certificate required for cremation purposes;
- submitting the press notice, although the clients prepare the wording;
- assisting with funeral arrangements, burial, cremation etc;
- liaison with crematorium or cemetery; and
- registering the death with registry office.

You can discuss and negotiate specific aspects of a funeral, including:

- embalmment or not
- makeup or not, clothing choices
- use of celebrant/minister/Quaker elder or other Quaker
- coffin choice – including 'home made' or decorated (see Appendix 3)
- coffin open or closed
- separate viewing of body at funeral director's or at home
- use of director's chapel or elsewhere for service
- vehicles used
- staff in attendance
- attenders' record books
- use of music
- sound recording
- pallbearers

It is possible to arrange a funeral and burial/cremation without the help of a funeral director, although this is less common as an arrangement and the responsibility could be onerous for the person asked to do so.

Try to be an informed consumer. You may wish to visit and view a number of facilities obtaining various written quotations stating the specific arrangements and terms of payment. You may wish to consider a number of reputable operators, before making your choice. Select a company whose staff you feel comfortable with and whose financial terms suit your budget.

Quaker funeral coordinators can give advice if required about funeral directors who have been found helpful.

The funeral director can make enquiries on your behalf if you are considering the option of burial on private property. If there is not an existing gravesite, there will have to be considerable consideration of the site before permission will be given by local authority. The family should consider eventualities if the property passes out of family hands.

A funeral director will require the following information about the person who has died (see Appendix K - page 3):

- Full name, usual place of residence, occupation.

- Date and place of birth, length of residence in Australia (if applicable).
- Marital status at death.
- Mother's and father's full names (where there has been a change of name for either parent, as at marriage, the prior name will also be required) and occupations.
- Whether the person who has died had a pacemaker or any other implanted device.
- Whether the person who has died stated a preference for cremation or burial, or wished to donate organs or body.

If the person who has died has been married, the following information is required for each marriage:

- Date and place of marriage.
- Spouse's Name (including name prior to marriage, if different).
- Date and place of death of spouse if they predeceased the person

If the person who has died had children (including children by adoption):

- Name, gender and date of birth for each.
- The number of deceased children of each gender.

Natural Burials

What is a natural burial?

The Australasian Cemeteries and Crematoria Association define a natural burial as the act of returning the body as naturally as possible to the earth. The body is not embalmed or cremated but instead buried in a simple casket or shroud in a protected green space. Only biodegradable and non toxic materials may be buried with the body as part of a natural burial.

How are natural burials different from standard burials?

By choosing a natural burial, people are choosing a burial method that has a lower environmental impact. A natural burial reduces the energy and resource consumption associated with traditional practices in the longer term.

Are there markers to identify where the body was buried?

Natural burial grounds only contain natural markers that blend with the landscape.

These markers can include shrubs and trees, or rocks or stones which may be engraved.

How can people find their deceased family member?

As in all cemeteries, careful records are kept of every interment and sites are mapped with a Geographic Information System (GIS).

Are there any natural burial grounds in Australia?

Natural burials grounds are located in:

- Lismore Memorial Gardens Bushland cemetery (NSW)
- Kingston (Tasmania)

- Pinnaroo Valley Memorial Park (Western Australia)
- Lilydale Cemeteries Trust (Victoria)
- Queanbeyan Cemetery (ACT) has a 'bush' section
- Enfield Memorial Park (SA)
- QLD is considering its first natural burial.

Internationally, natural burial grounds are the fastest growing environmental movement in the United Kingdom. The first woodland burial ground was opened in 1993 and there are now approximately 200 in the UK.

(from 'Quaker News Victoria' #235 June 2010)

Appendix B – Life-centred Funerals/Memorial Services

The Handbook of Practice and Procedure, Section 10, provides guidelines:

There is no rigid pattern for the conduct of Quaker funerals. It will usually be felt that at the time of the funeral there should be a short Meeting for Worship after the manner of Friends, at the home, at the Meeting House, at the crematorium or at the graveside.

It may also be appropriate to hold a Memorial Meeting for Worship at the Meeting House or elsewhere at a time different from the funeral - usually later.

...The Meeting for Worship is a time of prayer for and the upholding of those who mourn, as well as for the giving of thanks for the grace of God in the life of the person who has died.

...Friends are encouraged to maintain great simplicity in funeral arrangements and in the choice of gravestones.

A funeral/memorial service is not a legal necessity. Anyone can plan or conduct one. It can be private or public, religious or civil in tone, traditional or completely personal. You may wish to hold a funeral or a memorial service or both for the person who has died.

Funeral or memorial service?

Funeral service

- It may be convenient and symbolic to have the farewell and disposal of the body on the one occasion
- Seeing the coffin may help mourners face what has happened.
- For some people, the physical presence of the body may be important.

A service (open or by invitation) may be held at the place of committal – crematorium chapel or graveside.

Reasons for witnessing lowering of coffin	Reasons for not witnessing the lowering
1) Strongly reinforces the reality and finality of the person's physical death 2) Clearly defines end of the service 3) The person who has died appears to be leaving you, rather than you turning your back on her or him.	1) Some can't bear to see the coffin being lowered. 2) In some crematorium chapels the symbolic lowering may appear unnecessarily theatrical 3) It may soften a harsh reality.

Memorial service

- The emphasis and the focus of the occasion seem to be shifted from the body, and transferred to the life of the person.
- More flexibility about time, place and structure of the gathering is possible.
- Some expenses can be avoided or reduced.

Place of service

- Meeting house/church
- Graveside (Your choice to see/not to see the lowering. Some may wish to fill in the grave themselves)
- Funeral director's chapel
- Crematorium chapel
- Outdoors—beach or park—check booking arrangements, whether coffin is allowed, etc. with the local council—whether a sound system is needed.
- Clubrooms—usually have sound system & catering facilities
- Home or home garden—with or without the coffin. This may be a good option when children, frail elderly relatives and those who don't want a big service are involved.

Timing of service

Funerals can be delayed for weeks if desired—e.g. as a result of a delayed release of the body or if family members are interstate or overseas. The body will need to be embalmed if there is a long delay or the body needs to be transported. Check with funeral director.

Some cultures have definite requirements.

Public health regulations dictate timing in some states. ACT has no set time limit.

Planning an ecumenical or secular service

A funeral/memorial service may include the following elements, which need not always be solemn.

- Use of minister/civil celebrant (funeral directors have lists of celebrants)/family member/friend.
- Reminiscences/arranged eulogies/inviting people present to speak.
- Music—sung or recorded – this will need preparation in advance.
- Readings and poetry— these can provide comfort or represent views or the life of the person who has died – rehearsing is a good idea.
- Guided meditation or visualisation.
- Silent reflection.
- An effective form that has been used is to start with a ceremony led by a celebrant, with conventional elements (readings, eulogy, prayers). The celebrant has then led the gathering into a change of style—ie Quaker worship, into which people are invited to speak. After a period of such worship the celebrant has resumed leadership, and closed the ceremony in a fitting way.
- Participatory rituals (e.g. lighting candles, placing flowers, releasing balloons, scattering or planting something in the earth).
- Symbolic rituals (e.g. passing treasured item on to next generation, releasing a dove, planting a tree over the ashes).
- Flowers – from a florist and/or home gardens.
- Donation (money or objects) to charity or a cause meaningful to person who has died.
- Photos & personal items on display—photo albums, pin boards, PowerPoint presentation give a focus to sharing of memories.
- Memento or record of service for mourners to take away. Such a handout can be sent to friends and relatives who have been unable to attend.

- Recording of service—most funeral chapels arrange audiotape record of service. People may wish to consider photographs or a video recording?
- Condolences book for people—helpful for mourners to have a record of people’s memories or message to them.
- Social gathering after service— such an event can be catered or mourners can bring a plate— or not? Arranging this can be delegated – to the Quaker hospitality committee if appropriate.

Further services

- Consider whether more than one ritual is needed. Another ceremony at a later time may assist mourners, especially if the person’s death has been sudden and unexpected or mourners were unable to be present e.g. a further ceremony or memorial can be held on the anniversary of the death or the person’s birthday?
- If person has been cremated, a ritual could be held for depositing or interment of ashes, which can take place at any time. This could be a family or public occasion.

Appendix C – Coffins

At funerals, the coffin is one of the most obvious elements of the occasion. Consistent with the Quaker testament of simplicity, you may wish to consider building and/or decorating a home-made coffin, having one custom-made, or purchasing a basic one from the funeral director and personalising it.

Building a home-made coffin

Building a coffin may help mourners considerably by:

- Bonding the family and community of the person who has died in a common project
- Giving them a physical task to do at a stage when time seems to pass slowly
- Giving them the sense of doing the final act of caring since the person who has died has no other earthly needs
- Providing opportunities for laughter and tears in planning how to decorate the coffin to reflect the life of the person who has died
- Signalling that the funeral/memorial service will be a celebration of life
- Helping them re-establish a sense of having some control
- Giving them a sense of achievement.

(Contact Michael Searle, Canberra Regional Meeting, for advice on building a simple plywood coffin). Not all funeral directors are willing to accept a home-made coffin. Check with yours what their requirements would be. Health requirements, for instance, may require that the box be lined with a waterproof liner. This may easily be met by using garden-weight plastic sheeting stapled near the top edge of the inside of the box. The furnace used for cremation may set limits on the width of the coffin, handles included. A cardboard coffin may or may not be acceptable to your funeral director or the crematorium.

Personalising a purchased coffin

Funeral directors sell a range of ready-made coffins -from particle board to more elaborate or substantial coffins. After purchase, coffins can be taken away and personalised by, for example:

- painting or varnishing the exterior
- covering the exterior in messages or drawings
- lining the interior in something consistent with the person's lifestyle
- if unadorned, the coffin can be draped with something appropriate (e.g. a special cloth, rug)
- consider photograph on top, farewell messages, cards, drawings.

Consider whether you would like any items to be sealed in the coffin. Consider crematorium requirements. Consider whether you would like the coffin open or closed at the funeral -or open for viewing at chapel or at home.

Pallbearers—may walk with trolley or carry the coffin. If carrying, consider need to rehearse.

Transport—coffin does not have to be conveyed in a hearse. You can use a family car.

Appendix D – Looking after financial and other arrangements of the person who has died

Places you may need to notify of the death

- Any club or organisation of which the person who has died was a member. They may wish to advise other members, and also dues may continue to accrue.
- If the person who has died was in receipt of a Government Pension or Benefit, notify the Centrelink office. If the person who has died was in receipt of a Centrelink benefit, and both the applicant and the person who has died were in receipt of a full pension including fringe benefits, and were domiciled together, the double pension payments will continue for up to seven fortnightly payments after the death, before reducing to a single pension payment.
- If the person who has died was in receipt of a Service Pension or a War Disability Pension, notify the office of the Department of Veterans' Affairs. This phone number will also be in the Government section of your local phone book.
- Contact the Executor, Solicitor or Trustee Company to make an appointment regarding the administration of the Estate.
- If it applies, notify the lending institution that holds the mortgage on the home of the person who has died, as adjustments may have to be made to the agreement if there is a surviving spouse.
- At a later time an Income Tax Return may have to be filed with the Commissioner of Taxation for the period from 1 July in the previous year to the date of death.

Financial Assistance for funeral or cremation arrangements

- Government financial assistance may be available for those who cannot afford the cost. In the ACT the funeral director assesses the situation and negotiates where applicable with the office for Children, Youth and Family Support.
- Centrelink has a booklet *Needing Help after Someone has Died* on their website www.centrelink.gov.au has details.
- If the person who has died was in receipt of a War Disability Pension, he or she could be eligible for a grant from the Department of Veterans' Affairs.
- If the person who has died was a member of a Friendly Society, Lodge, Trade Union, Medical Benefits or any other organisation that could have a mortuary benefit fund, contact them for details of how to apply for a grant.

Appendix E – Things you may wish to consider when contemplating or approaching death

What experiences of death and dying have made an impact on your life? How did these experiences affect your spiritual life?

Assuming that physical pain can be alleviated, for you, what would constitute a “good” death?

Some faiths have rituals and special prayers that comfort people as they are dying. Are there people/words/music you like to see/hear at the time of your death?

How does Quaker spiritual practice prepare us to face our own death?

How does Quaker spiritual practice prepare us to face the death of those close to us?

Quaker Testimonies consider the grace of God in the life of the person who has died. List some manifestations of the grace of God in your life to date.

“Let your last thoughts be thanks.” (W.H. Auden) What would you give thanks for if you were to die today?

How can we personally, and as a faith community, support someone who is dying?

How can we personally, and as a faith community, support someone who is recently bereaved?

Do we allow people sufficient time to grieve, or do we expect them to “get on with life” too quickly.

Acknowledgements

‘Death & Funeral Practices’ Summer School, Australia Yearly Meeting 2004, Avondale College, Cooranbong, NSW

Queensland Regional Meeting 2005, ‘In the Event of Death’ document.

Appendix F – How Friends support one another before, during and after death

How can we, individually & as a faith community, support someone who is seriously ill or dying?

Often we are not sure how to assist or support others through a difficult time. We don't know what to do or say and we worry about doing or saying something unhelpful or insensitive. While individuals vary in their preferences about what will work best, the following ideas are/might be useful.

- Make contact with the person or their family. Even if all you can say is “I don't know what to say” use that or another genuine expression to break the ice.
- Be prepared to “be with” the person wherever and however they are—whether they want to talk or cry or be silent.
- Consider how long to visit the person – you might even ask them what suits them – sometimes the person will tire easily or there may be others who wish to visit. Sometimes the person is grateful for a visit, and prefers these to be brief.
- Sometimes the person would very much like you to stay longer – even if they doze while you are there.
- Avoid giving advice or talking about your own experiences as if they match the person you are visiting – this is a time to be led by the person's own thoughts, feelings and needs rather than your own.
- As a faith community, we can offer special meetings for worship in the home of the person, at the nursing home, the hospital or hospice, or at the Meeting House.
- Consider whether the dying person might want to talk about spiritual/life matters, as they face their death? Consider whether you are the person with whom they wish to talk? Offer the opportunity rather than leave the topic unexplored. Try not to be offended if they do not want to talk.

How can we, individually & as a faith community, support someone who is recently bereaved?

This is a time to be gentle – with the bereaved and with ourselves. Recently bereaved people are often in a state of shock. It is natural to be unsure how to proceed and how to behave.

Giving and receiving support in a range of ways can be therapeutic for the bereaved.

- Take along casserole or other food for them or their visitors.
- Sometimes giving flowers is appreciated.
- Offer to do chores or tasks to support them.

It's okay for them (and you) to cry.

Accept the fact that what you say may be awkward, or ‘a blunder’. It's often better to take the risk of saying something that turns out wrong than to say nothing to acknowledge the new, unfamiliar situation.

Don't assume they don't want social contact. Offer them the choice of attending an event or activity or not ... “This is coming up. I don't know if you're ready. Let me know if you want to come...”

Don't be judgmental if a person who has lost a partner begins to start dating again earlier than you had expected. People have different needs, approaches, and expectations. Some sectors of society also have different expectations for the divorced and the widowed person.

As a faith community, we can offer special meetings for worship in the person's home or at the Meeting House. As a faith community, we should also not lose sight of the fact that others in the meeting may be going through their own dark valleys. The family may appreciate or need spiritual support from fellow members of the faith community.

Remember people other than the family and the immediately bereaved are also suffering and in need of our support.

People react to life and death differently. People may be raw, sensitive, vulnerable, or feel lost for a long time after bereavement. Some conventional wisdom suggests that "a person will get over it" after a month or so. Some people wish never "to be over the loss of a loved one". This is OK. The bereaved person is viewing life with a new set of insights and priorities, and may have much to offer from this new perspective.

In bereavement, give yourself time to grieve. When others mourn, let your love embrace them. (Advices & Queries, No. 30)

Appendix G – Care of the dying

Healing the Divide, Part 1. Being with Dying: Cultivating Compassion and Fearlessness in the Presence of Death

By Joan Halifax, Ph.D.

In many spiritual teachings, the great divide between life and death collapses into an integrated energy that cannot be fragmented. In this view, to deny death is to deny life. Old age, sickness, and death do not have to be equated with suffering; we can live and practice in such a way that dying is a natural rite of passage, a completion of our life, and even the ultimate in liberation.

The fear-bound American version of "the good death" is a death that is too often life-denying, antiseptic, drugged-up, tube-entangled-institutionalized. And our glaring absence of meaningful ritual, manuals, and materials for a conscious death has generated a plethora of literature. Although techniques for compassionate care have been developed specifically for dying people and caregivers, many of these teachings on death can address healthy adventurers as well -acolytes eager not only to explore the full range of life's possibilities but also to focus pragmatically on the one and only certainty of our lives.

After four decades of sitting with dying people and their caregivers, I believe that studying the process of how to die well benefits even those of us who may have many years of life ahead. Of course, people who are sick or suffering, dying of old age or catastrophic illnesses, may be more receptive to exploring the great matter of dying than those who are young and healthy, or who still believe in their own indestructibility. Yet the sooner we can embrace death, the more time we have to live completely, and to live in reality. Our acceptance of our death influences not only the experience of dying but also the experience of living; life and death lie along the same continuum. One cannot as so many of us try to do - lead life fully and struggle to keep the inevitable at bay.

In our discomfort, we often joke about death, the only thing as certain as taxes. Woody Allen has famously typified the attitude most of us find amusing and normal: "It's not that I'm afraid to die, I just don't want to be there when it happens." Funny, yes; but the tragic distortion is that when you avoid death, you also avoid life. And I don't know about you, but I want to be there through all of it.

When a group of people gathers together for a meditation retreat, important shifts in one's mind and life may unfold. I often think of one retreat in particular, because what happened one day illustrates with fierce clarity the fragility of these human bodies we inhabit, and the gravity of what Buddhists call "the great matter of life and death."

Tin's particular retreat took place sometime in the seventies at a quiet center on Cortez Island in Canada, a place then called Cold Mountain Institute. It was the beginning morning of the program, and we had just finished the first period of silent sitting meditation. The bell rang softly to announce the end of the period, and we all stretched our legs and stood up to do walking practice -but one man remained seated.

I remember feeling concern as I turned to look at him: why was he not getting up? He was still sitting in full-lotus position, his legs perfectly folded and his feet resting on his thighs. Then, as I watched in shock, his body tilted over to one side, slumped and sagging, and he fell to the floor. He died on the spot. There

were several doctors and nurses participating in the retreat who helped perform CPR and administer oxygen, but it was too late. Later we learned that his aorta had burst while we were all sitting.

This man was healthy enough -perhaps in his late thirties. He almost certainly had not imagined when he came to this retreat that he would die during it. And yet-that day-sixty people sat down to meditate -and only fifty-nine stood up.

It's an unnerving story to most of us, who move through our lives feeling and acting as though we are immortal. We glibly reel off truisms about death being a part of life, a natural phase of the cycle of existence -and yet this is not the place from which most of us really function. Denial of death runs rampant through our culture, leaving us woefully unprepared when it is our time to die, or our time to help others die. We often aren't available for those who need us, paralyzed as we are by anxiety and resistance nor are we available for ourselves.

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Care of the Dying: A Spiritual Discipline

by Brad Sheeks (quoted in Australia YM Secretary's Newsletter August 2004)

Attending the death of a loved one is a painful, sometimes disturbing experience. Frequently it has a deeply mysterious quality; somewhat similar to being present at the birth of a child.

As a hospice nurse, at times, when I am in the presence of death, I feel a primitive, visceral desire for a comforting ritual such as the Catholic last rites or the Tibetan Book of the Dead. The mystery of death is sometimes glimpsed obliquely, almost out of the corner of the eye. The Spirit is present (but not always in plain sight), helping us to learn about compassion and acceptance.

'How do you do it on a daily basis?' friends sometimes ask about my work. 'How do you avoid burnout?' For me it is a spiritual discipline. It is to walk a middle path between over-identification with the patient, and, on the other hand, too much distance. I risk over-identifying with the family members, caught up in the pain and frustration of not being able to stop the slide towards death. My personal distress would reduce my ability to suggest specific nursing interventions to relieve pain, nausea, agitation, shortness of breath, and so forth.

On the other hand I risk becoming the distant clinician, unmoved by the suffering in the room. In this mode, I would not be available at a heart and human level to the family. What good would I be to the family if all I had to offer could be found in my handy Nurses Drug Handbook?

But I have the easy part. My question for the families who care for a dying loved one, day in and day out, is the same question, 'How do they do it?' They are the heroes and heroines. They've taught me that caring for the dying is a spiritual discipline. Mother Teresa spoke of seeing the face of Jesus when she reached out to wipe the dust from a dying child's face. Similarly, I feel that the act of giving this care opens me to an awareness of the Divine Presence.

I would like to share with you a few stories that I believe illustrate some of the spiritual disciplines of caring for the dying. I've changed the names in each story; for the purpose of privacy, except for the last one about the memorial bench.

Just Being Here

'Here's the thing.' John said to me one day after we had changed the dressing on a bedsore for his dying wife. 'I'm a plumber, you know. I fix things that are broken. But here, with Elizabeth, the way she is, most of the time I don't do anything at all.'

'Could that be it in a nutshell, John?' I asked. 'Just being here?' John leaned back in his chair. He peeled off the rubber gloves, tossed them in the trash basket, and for several minutes we sat in silence. We noticed that Elizabeth's face started to soften and her breathing became a little less labored. He glanced at me and said, 'This is hard work, just being here.'

Each Day is a Gift

'It's a good day,' Helen said with a wry smile as we sat around a table in her patio, 'when you wake up and you're still alive. Sure, I've got pain, but I'll take it in trade to be able to see that fat old robin looking for a worm out here in the yard.'

'There's a verse in the Bible that goes something like this,' I said. 'This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice in it.'

Helen turned and looked me in the eye. 'I've lost my appetite, Brad, and I'm getting pain in some new places. How much time do I have?' I saw in her face that she knew the answer to her question. 'Each day is a gift,' she said, just above a whisper. I reached out and she took my hand, holding tight. 'Yes, each day,' she repeated. 'It's a gift.'

An Unseen Presence

'Did you know God has a sense of humor?' Rachel asked me one day after her husband, David, had died. 'We talked, David and I,' she continued, 'about what happens after you die. David said he'd try to let me know he was OK. One day, about a month after he died, his sister came to the house. Now, she was someone David didn't get along with very well. It was a clear, sunny day, except for a small cloud passing over the house. Suddenly, as his sister was standing on the porch, a downfall drenched her. It didn't touch me.'

I asked, 'What do you make of it?' We looked at each other and both cracked up laughing.

Rachel said, 'I guess there's a lot going on we don't need to know about.'

Forgiveness

'I told Dad this morning it was OK for him to go now,' Bill said to me as I stepped in the door. As we sat in his living room, I noticed a new softness in his face. He'd been asking his dad to eat, to get out of bed and move around, fighting to keep him alive. 'You know,' he said, 'I've been mad at that old bastard all these years. This morning it all melted away. I told him I loved him and kissed his cheek.'

'Forgiveness,' I said, 'It's a curious thing, isn't it?'

'Yes, it finally came to me last night,' he said. 'It's not about being right or wrong. Or even about justice. I carried a load of stuff he'd done that I hadn't forgiven. Then last night it was like standing on a bridge and taking that load of anger and resentment off my shoulder, dropping it in the river, and watching it float away. I saw it sink under the water and it was gone.'

Dennis' bench

'I'm a teacher,' Dennis Fox told me one day, shortly before he died. 'I want to leave something behind—something of myself.' Then he told me that he had just visited 'his bench,' a place for joggers to sit and rest for a moment. Later, while biking on Kelly Drive, I found his bench, just under the Strawberry Mansion Bridge, up a bit from the boat house ...

I sat down on Dennis's bench. An elderly man came walking along, a slight limp favoring his left leg, his white hair peeking out under an old Phillies cap. We made eye contact and smiled. He sat down beside me on the bench.

I said, '...My friend Dennis and I were the same age. We both had sons the same age.'

'You were friends a long time?' he asked.

'Funny thing was,' I answered, 'I only knew him a few months, before he died. I was his visiting nurse. But it seemed we were brothers. No, it was more than that. I saw myself in him.' I looked up as two joggers came running past our bench.

'Part of Dennis lives on in me.' I said, just above a whisper. 'I just don't know.'

We sat for a while, that old man and I, neither of us saying anything. Then he got up and shook my hand. 'Son,' he said, 'we don't have to understand everything.'

Brad Sheeks works as a visiting nurse for Heartland Hospice in the Philadelphia, Pa., area.

He is a member of Central Philadelphia Meeting. He and his wife, Patricia McBee, lead couples enrichment programs for Friends General Conference.

Appendix H – Life and Death

by Malcolm Whyte (2007)

In general life is something we relish and death is something we dread. We see them as being poles apart: one an ongoing, vibrant, positive activity, the other an unproductive, negative destroyer of life; one cheerful and brightly coloured, the other dark and gloomy; one a friend, the other a foe. Oh, to be rid of that Grim Reaper so that we may enjoy life eternal!

However, looking more closely at this relationship between life and death – throughout our life, not just at the end of life – offers, I suggest, a very different picture for us to contemplate. It is, indeed, a topsy-turvy picture in which some deaths are seen to be desirable, in which it becomes evident that there is no life without death, and in which we realise that we constantly live with and because of death. It could even lead to the exclamation ‘Thank God for death!’

For this closer scrutiny of the subject we can conveniently make use of the commonly held time-line of human life which commences with conception, followed by nine months of life in the womb, then life in the world (short or long; with its ups and downs), and ends in death. A life sentence ending with a full-stop!

Death when life begins

Let’s look at the beginning of life, at conception. Your life and mine started with one egg, from mum, and one sperm, from dad, combining to make one expanded cell from which we have grown. Mum had a quarter of a million cells in her ovary ready to mature into eggs, and mature they did, but only at the rate of one a month, say, 4 or 5 hundred in her lifetime: all the rest, more than 200,000 ultimately went to waste, died; just like all those acorns dropped from the oak tree in your street. The same for the sperm. One sperm was successful in fertilising the egg; only one gained entry out of 20 or so which knocked on the door of the egg; only one of an estimated 500 million or so that would have been in the one ejaculation of semen. One sperm was able to get on with its life work, while millions of its brothers died in the attempt. So, our lives began with death all around, in a very, very big way,. And when later we came to be born, our umbilical lifeline shrivelled and died and the placenta which was our life-support in utero was discarded to die: somewhat like a skydiver discarding a parachute after landing.

Death to sustain life

The fertilised egg cell went on to live, multiply, and gradually produce about 200 different types of cells to make the various organs of the body, and the baby grew bigger and bigger. An adult body is made up of about 100 million million cells— which is many more than there are people in the whole world—all of them in this one body descendants of our original Adam sperm and Eve ovum. But this growth is only possible because of death, because to live and grow we have to eat and what nourishes us is other forms of life. We have evolved as part of a food chain. These days we are not cannibals but we kill chickens and

cows and carrots and cauliflowers and crabs and all sorts of other living things, animal and vegetable, and eat them. In Australia we kill 500,000,000 animals per year for food. It's murder; death; so that we may live. There is no life for me or you without death of them. We can't live and grow by eating lifeless stuff like charcoal and gravel and sand.

Death during life

And while all this living with its growth and development is going on we are dying; our cells are dying. There is death during life. Much of the dust we wipe off shelves at home comes from dead skin cells. Skin cells only live for about three weeks before they are replaced by new ones. You are not quite who you were three weeks ago; you are being reborn as it were, again and again. That's the outside lining of the body. It is even more drastic for the inner lining of the body, the digestive tract, the intestines; there the cells only live 3 to 6 days. And if we turn to the blood rushing continuously round the body we find that some elements, the platelets, live for a few days, red cells for about three months and some of the white cells for years. The cells in some other organs of the body – brain, heart and muscles – are said not to die, that is, not till we die and stop feeding them. Cells that do die are replaced and the extent of this loss and replenishment is tremendous. Measurements are most easily made of the turnover of red blood cells and the finding is that 2 million of them die every second; yes, every second. As for the body as a whole it is said to be made up of about one million billion cells and that about 6 million of them die every second; that amounts to the death, and replacement, of more than 10 million billion bodily cells in a three-score-years-and-ten lifetime!

Death in balance

As cells die they need to be replaced by fresh new ones, otherwise we would get out of shape and not function properly. It would not be nice if deaths exceeded replacement; in the blood system this would lead to anaemia and too few circulating red cells to transport the oxygen all cells need to survive and do their jobs. But, it is equally unhealthy, upsetting to life, if multiplication exceeds the loss. This is cancer territory. Cells are programmed to die, to commit suicide after their allotted span of life. If the programme gets disrupted by, for example, the equivalent of a virus in a computer programme, and cells lose the inbuilt command to die, then we have a cancer, a malignancy (that is, cells with malign or evil intent), which grows and grows, refusing to die, and which becomes a spanner in the collaborative working of cells in other parts of the bodily system. What must we do about this? Well, prevention is better than cure, of course, and we would be wise to do, well ahead of time, whatever might help to prevent our cells from losing their timely ability to die. But if the balance has already tipped towards too much growth and too little death, then we might decide to take action: to forcibly remove the misbehaving tissue by surgery; to kill the cells with liquid nitrogen, or radiation, or chemo; or in some clever way get them to repent and start suiciding again, to resume the practice of euthanasia. We need death to be able to live. Thank God for those deaths!

Ubiquitous death

I have led you along the pathway of life, and death. From the very beginning of our life, at conception, which occurs in the midst of death; through birth, where supporting tissues were discarded to die; to see our dependence on death for the food we need to sustain life; to appreciate what is not usually realised, that parts of our body are dying daily, massive numbers of cells; that for healthy existence there is a

necessary continuous balancing act between life and death; and that trouble arises if death during life does not happen when it should, which is cancer, and we then set about causing death of the offending parts so that life elsewhere can proceed. I suggest, however, that we can look beyond that linear span of human life to see that life and death are built into the whole universal scheme of things. Right down the tree of evolution and its food chain you see death and life sprinkled together like salt and pepper; it is from the slow dying of the sun that we get our life-supporting radiation; and, we are told, that it was from the death of stars that stardust came and provided the initial building blocks for life on earth. All through the whole cosmic system life and death are intertwined like warp and weft in a massive, variegated tapestry. Whether we like it or not, life and death are travelling companions, so we may as well accept the situation, encourage them to talk to each other, and become friends, not enemies.

Contemplating death itself

What is this death, these many deaths we have been considering? In general we could say that death marks the end of a tour of duty, whether of a cell or any more complicated form of life – mission accomplished. Death may reduce overpopulation, in some part of the body, or of rabbits in the wild, or of people on earth. Or it may make way for fresh replacements. Or it may provide nourishment and stimulation for other living things, thinking of salmon as food for bears or humans, or of the sun for all life on earth. Or it may result in the material of life being reduced to its elemental particles, back to stardust, fit for recycling. Some will say there is more to it than these materialistic prospects; but what? Who knows? At any rate the deaths that I have been talking about seem to be but broken threads of life, leaving in the overall tapestry nothing more than little holes, or knots where one broken thread gets tied to another, scattered all across the overall tapestry; and there is life before, after and all around these little knots; and, indeed, the knots are an integral part of the pattern of the tapestry which we call life.

Appreciating death in this way offers no promise of helping us if our hope and expectation is to be able to eliminate death, or delay death, or enable us to cope better with death but it may, in fact, do so indirectly by familiarising us with death, allaying the anxiety and fear commonly associated with the thought of death, and decreasing associated stress, depression and grief. Naturally, it is intriguing to wonder about all this in relation to what seems to be the really big D ahead of all of us, the D which gets all the big black headlines and obituaries and headstones. In the meantime, however, it is important, and I dare say much more fruitful, to get on with living life to the full while we have it.

[This article was provided by Malcolm Whyte and was the basis for a talk in the Autumn Cancer Forum '07 of the Cancer Council ACT]

Appendix I – Useful quotes and information from Quaker and other sources

Quaker Faith & Practice (Britain YM, 1994) – sections 17, 21.49 to 21.58 and 22.80 to 22.95

This We Can Say (Australian Yearly Meeting, 2003) – section 4.29 – 4.37

Handbook of Practice and Procedure in Australia (Australian Yearly Meeting 2011) – section 4.8

Are you able to contemplate your death and the death of those closest to you? Accepting the fact of death, we are freed to live more fully. In bereavement, give yourself time to grieve. When others mourn, let your love embrace them. (“This We Can Say”, Advices & Queries, No 6.30)

Once we have squarely faced the inescapable fact of our own death, we need never fear it but turn and live life to the hilt as we have seen that it should be lived. Then, whether our life be long or short, it will have been a full one. (*Dear Gift of Life*, Pendle Hill pamphlet)

If you have seen any man die, think that you yourself shall go the same way. Wherefore be ever ready and live so that death find you never unready. Keep thyself as a pilgrim and a guest upon the earth to whom belongeth nothing of worldly business. (Thomas a Kempis)

Q: Master, how do I prepare for death?

A: Learn to live.

Q: Then how shall I learn to live?

A: Prepare yourself for death.

(Zen Comics)

Some thoughts from ‘Summer School’ 2004:

For you, what would constitute a “good” death?

Most of us are clearer on what would not be a “good” death.

A good death would occur in the natural way—e.g. from old age or disease—rather than through violence.

Dying with dignity and integrity.

Keeping some sense of control.

Dying in a way consistent with how I have lived my life.

Dying with a sense of completion of my life.

Dying at home.

I hope I would have done my best to reconcile any tensions in relationships.

Dying having finished the unfinished business in my life to the best of my ability.

Dying at a good time, having lived a good life.

Achieving a good balance between pain relief and consciousness. I want to be aware of the transition from life to death if possible.

If I'm old or terminally ill, I don't want any heroic medical interventions to save my life.

I would like to make informed decisions and have them accepted by family and medical staff.

Dying in the presence of people I love.

Dying in a quiet setting. Some silence if possible.

There is no one formula. We need to be observant, to listen and be intuitive in interpreting the wishes of the dying person.

Some people who are used to being "in control" don't want people to see them in circumstances where they are unwell or otherwise not in control.

THE HUMBLE, MEEK, MERCIFUL, JUST, PIOUS AND DEVOUT SOULS are everywhere of one religion and when death has taken off the mask they will know one another, though the diverse liveries they wear here makes them strangers. (William Penn, 1693 QF&P 27.01)

Appendix J – Useful resource and information

Websites

For information about Quaker practice and procedure:

<http://www.quakersaustralia.org.au>

For information about Advance Care Plans and Enduring Power of Attorney forms (including information for every state and territory in Australia:

<http://www.respectingpatientchoices.org.au/>

For information about Palliative Care in Australia:

<http://www.palliativecare.org.au/>

For information about independent living centres and services in Australia:

<http://www.ilcaustralia.org/home/default.asp>

For information about funerals:

<http://www.funeral-info.com.au/>

For information about grief and bereavement:

<http://www.grief.org.au/>

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/afrc/links/grief.html>

For information about Centrelink allowances and support services:

<http://australia.gov.au/life-events/death-and-bereavement>

Books

Australian Yearly Meeting : “This We Can Say – Australian Quaker Life, Faith and Thought” (2003)

Australian Yearly Meeting : “Handbook of Practice and Procedure in Australia” (2011)

Joan Halifax “Being with Dying: Cultivating Compassion and Fearlessness in the Presence of Death” (2010)

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross MD “On Death and Dying” Simon and Schuster (1997)

Christine Longaker “Facing Death and Finding Hope: A Guide to the Emotional and

Appendix K – Information that is required or may be helpful to others on the occasion of my death

The following template enables us to retain information that will be needed by the funeral director, the family, and the Quakers in the event of our death.

[See pamphlet ‘Information in the event of death’]