

# PYM Faith and Practice Revisions - 2020

**Preamble:** The Faith and Practice Revision Committee has continued preparing drafts of several sections of Faith and Practice for posting on the Pacific Yearly Meeting website. This new “rolling revision” process is based on the Quaker understanding of continuing revelation, as congruent with new technologies that make it possible for us to revise the document incrementally. We are living into this “experimentally” as our forebears might have said.

This year we are presenting a revision of “Death and Grieving.” Though we started this work last year, we understand the tenderness of this topic during the pandemic. We have also added a suggested format for a Zoom Memorial in the Manner of Friends, which is on the PYM website. (<https://www.pacificyearlymeeting.org/2020/uncategorized/zoom-memorial-meetings-guidance/>)

The “Death and Grieving” revision considers different ways that people die, with the hope of bringing love and healing as well as nurturing the spiritual growth that can occur at the end of life. We are asking Meetings, committees and other entities of the Yearly Meeting (for instance JYM, or YAF), to discern together about the proposed new language and to share feedback with us at

**[PYM.FPRRevision@gmail.com](mailto:PYM.FPRRevision@gmail.com) by June 30th.**

If you reach unity on suggestions you would like to make, let us know. If you struggled with the text and can give us input on issues where you did not find unity, that is also welcome. We are asking that individual Friends NOT send comments, but participate in larger group discernment, as is our tradition. We are also asking Friends to contribute medical and legal resources that are relevant to Hawaii, Mexico, and Nevada for the electronic appendix.

Queries you may find useful for your discernment:

1. What have Friends found helpful during times of profound loss in their lives?
2. Has your meeting been able to provide a loving support to those who were dying, and to those who care for them? What would help?
3. We have addressed many of the ways that Meetings have experienced unexpected death (such as suicide) and subsequent grieving responses. In what way would including these situations in Faith and Practice help or hinder your Meetings’ response to the families involved?
4. Would you like resources for Friends who feel led to be more supportive around end of life questions, preparation, grief, and loss? Do you have any resources you would recommend?
5. Do you find the internet resources at the end of this document helpful? Do you have any other resources you could suggest? These resources can be updated in real time.

--- PYM Faith and Practice Revision Committee, May 2, 2020

# Death in the Meeting

*Friends find that preparation for death is in many ways a preparation for deeper living. It includes an awareness that our lives will end and a realization that our lives have an eternal dimension.*

Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association, 1990

Death confronts us with some of the most difficult questions and most profound insights into the meaning of life. As Friends seek to surround the dying and the bereaved with love and care, the sustaining power of God can bring courage to all concerned with transformative truth about death and life itself.

## Preparing for Death

*Make provisions for the settlement of all outward affairs while in health, so that others may not be burdened and so that one may be freed to live more fully in the Truth that shall stand against all the entanglements, distractions, and confusions of our times.*

Epistles of Yearly Meetings of Pennsylvania and the Jerseys, 1694 and 1695,  
as paraphrased by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Faith & Practice, 1997

Early Friends thought of death as an apotheosis--a joining with God after a lifetime of yearning to draw nearer to that Mystery. Though Friends have a diversity of beliefs about an afterlife, the time of dying can be as profound and full of beauty as the time of pregnancy and birth.

While they are free from unusual mental or physical pressures, adult Friends of all ages are strongly urged to complete a Will and Durable Powers of Attorney (for both financial and medical concerns), and to inform medical personnel and family of their wishes. This is especially true for those who have dependents. Friends should consider whether their financial situation warrants additional measures such as a Living Trust. Wills, Powers of Attorney, and Living Trusts should all be regularly reviewed, and immediately updated when changes are warranted. Couples who are not legally married need to take special care that their legal papers reflect their wishes about end-of-life decision making and finances.

Meetings can aid members by gathering information about hospice/palliative (symptom-focused) care, mortuaries, and relevant legal issues such as organ donation and donation of the body for scientific purposes. An adult education session about end of life planning is appropriate once a year or so, with knowledgeable presenters from inside or outside the meeting. This can also provide an opportunity for meeting members to witness the signing of one another's medical advance directive documents. Many Friends belong to memorial societies which contract for prompt, simple and inexpensive disposition of the body, frequently through cremation. Home funerals are another option and provide loved ones with the opportunity to care for and prepare the body of the deceased, as Friends traditionally did. Green burial, which uses biodegradable shrouds or caskets, and doesn't involve embalming, is increasingly available. It has a smaller ecological footprint than cremation, though at greater monetary expense. Being proactive about planning and

45 research is especially important for green burial, home funerals, organ donation, or  
46 donating a body for science. [See suggested online resources.]

47 It is useful for Meetings to maintain, along with Membership Records, a record of members'  
48 desires for the time of death, including a list of persons to be notified. A suggested form for  
49 this purpose, Information and Instructions on Health Care Decisions and Final Affairs, is  
50 found in Appendix 7. Members should review and update the information regularly.

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52

### **Support of the Dying and Their Spiritual Families**

53 There was a time when birth and death were home centered. Today, the hospice movement  
54 helps Friends experience and understand the role of family and friends during the time of  
55 impending death. Too many terminally ill people enroll in hospice in just the last few days  
56 of their lives, reducing the duration of this hallowed time. Meetings may find it appropriate  
57 to provide support to a dying person, and those who make up their circle of care over an  
58 extended period of time. Palliative care, which precedes hospice, can provide much needed  
59 support, including clear talk about medical decisions, as well as home or virtual visits from  
60 nurse, doctor, social worker, community health worker, and spiritual support  
61 counselor. Increasingly, hospital-based palliative care teams are available as well.

62 Family is where we find it, and may or may not be based in biological or legal relationships.  
63 It has been said that there is an epidemic of loneliness in modern life, particularly among  
64 older people, and meetings should not assume that all members and attenders have a circle  
65 of care outside of the meeting community.

66 Physician assisted dying (PAD) is legal in some areas. Friends may wish to use a clearness  
67 committee or other support in discerning whether this choice is appropriate for them,  
68 including consideration of concerns of those close to them.

69 Friends may offer to hold Meeting for Worship at the bedside of an ill or dying person as  
70 well as listening non-judgmentally to the wide variety of feelings that the seriously ill  
71 person and their loved ones may express. Some Friends may find they have a leading in  
72 this work.

73 It is always appropriate to offer practical assistance such as food, housekeeping, childcare,  
74 shopping, and funds. Members of the Meeting may also help assure that the necessary  
75 forms are in order, final arrangements have been made, respite care is available for the  
76 caregivers, as well as legal support for future decisions that may need to be made by the  
77 remaining family. It is usually helpful if the family does not have to arrange these things for  
78 themselves, beyond making clear requests. Financial support may be needed at the time of  
79 dying. The Meeting may wish to help with this and/or individuals can offer funds if so  
80 moved. Such funds would not be tax deductible.

81 Meeting representatives should make themselves available in an open and reassuring way  
82 to respond to the spiritual needs of the individual or the family. It is sometimes important  
83 to step in with supportive help, without offending the family, when those most closely  
84 involved are unable to make their needs known. It takes great sensitivity and caring on the  
85 part of the helping Friends to be appropriately supportive at this critical time.

86

87 **Meetings for Worship on the Occasion of Memorials**

88  
89 *They that love beyond the world cannot be separated by it. Death cannot kill what*  
90 *never dies. Nor can spirits ever be divided that love and live in the same Divine*  
91 *Principle, the root and record of their friendship. If absence be not death, neither is*  
92 *theirs.*

93 William Penn, 1693

94 *Eternity is at our hearts, pressing upon our time-torn lives, warming us with*  
95 *intimations of an astounding destiny, calling us home unto Itself.*

96 Thomas A. Kelly, A Testament of Devotion, 1941

97 When Friends suffer the loss of a loved one there is sustaining strength in the loving  
98 concern and helpfulness of the Meeting and its members. Friends are urged to make their  
99 needs known as they arise, and the Oversight Committee should give whatever specific  
100 help may be necessary when death comes. The committee asks Friends to visit and counsel  
101 with the family or friends of the deceased, offer assistance such as notifying relatives and  
102 friends, and to help plan a Memorial Meeting.

103 Friends' testimony on simplicity, and consideration for the wishes of the family, should  
104 govern the arrangements. Friends generally feel that a Memorial Meeting should occur  
105 following prompt and simple disposition of the body. The Oversight Committee oversees  
106 the arrangements for the Memorial Meeting. Meetings may hold Memorial Meetings for  
107 non-members. Memorials "in the manner of Friends" may also be held in the Meetinghouse,  
108 when the Meeting discerns what type of spiritual and logistical support it can offer.

109 For Friends, a Memorial Meeting for Worship on the occasion of death is a time to celebrate  
110 in the Light the life of an individual whose spirit has been released to God. It is a time to  
111 draw the living into the upholding comfort and loving care of the Divine Presence.

112 A Friend may be asked to talk briefly about the manner of the Meeting. (Some Meetings  
113 provide a written explanation of Friends Memorial Meetings.) A statement about the  
114 person may be prepared ahead of time and read if that is consistent with the spirit of the  
115 Meeting and the desires of the family.†

116 A simple reception may follow the Memorial Meeting. Such an occasion gives an  
117 opportunity to express grief, love and thanksgiving. For many, it is a helpful reentry into  
118 everyday life. Care of the ashes or burial is often handled at a separate time from the  
119 Memorial Meeting and is usually a family matter.†† This can be a particularly poignant  
120 moment, and the Meeting needs to be sensitive to the needs of the family for spiritual and  
121 community support.

122 The Oversight Committee oversees the preparation of a Memorial Minute, which  
123 emphasizes the deceased's life as a Friend, so that his or her journey may be a teacher to  
124 the Monthly Meeting and to the Yearly Meeting. The Oversight Committee should present  
125 the Memorial Minute to the Monthly Meeting for Business for inclusion in the Meeting  
126 minutes, and forward it to the Yearly Meeting Ministry and Oversight Committee. A copy of

127 the Minute should be included in the membership records of the deceased and it may also  
128 be sent to Friends' publications.

129  
130 *For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things*  
131 *present, nor things to come, nor powers; nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all*  
132 *creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

133 Romans 8:38-39

134  
135 *Death is no more than a turning of us over from time to eternity.*

136 William Penn

137  
138 *The night before landing in Liverpool I awoke in my berth with a strange sense of trouble*  
139 *and sadness. As I lay wondering what it meant, I felt myself invaded by a Presence and*  
140 *held by the Everlasting Arms. It was the most extraordinary experience I had ever had.*  
141 *But I had no intimation that anything was happening to Lowell [his eleven-year-old*  
142 *son]. When we landed in Liverpool a cable informed me that he was desperately ill, and a*  
143 *second cable, in answer to one from me, brought the dreadful news that he was gone.*  
144 *When the news reached my friend John Wilhelm Rowntree, he experienced a profound*  
145 *sense of Divine Presence enfolding him and me, and his comfort and love were an*  
146 *immense help to me in my trial. ... I know now as I look back across the years, that*  
147 *nothing has carried me up into the life of God, or done more to open out the infinite*  
148 *meaning of love, than the fact that love can span this break of separation, can pass*  
149 *beyond the visible and hold right on across the chasm. The mystic union has not broken*  
150 *and knows no end.*

151 Rufus. M. Jones, 1947

152  
153 † If the Memorial Minute is ready, it may be read at the Memorial Meeting. However, the  
154 status of the minute should not hold up the Memorial Meeting, which should be timed for  
155 the family convenience.

156 †† As of January 1, 1999, it is legal in California to scatter or bury ashes on private property  
157 including that owned by Meetings.

## 158 **Grieving**

159 *In bereavement, give yourself time to grieve. When others mourn, let your love*  
160 *embrace them.*

161 Britain Yearly Meeting,

162 Quaker Faith & Practice, 1995

163  
164 Grieving extends far beyond the initial turmoil of arranging for the Memorial and settling  
165 the affairs of the deceased and opens many opportunities for spiritual growth. It is a  
166 universal human experience; the inevitable result of loving connections with others. The  
167 stages of grief do not occur in a linear manner but are fluid and can reoccur. Some learn  
168 that they can feel angry at God, even deserted, and often through struggling with God have  
169 their faith strengthened. Many also experience the comfort of an omnipresent Spirit

170 throughout their grief. The gifts of grief can teach important lessons about the richness of  
171 living.

172 Friends should provide an atmosphere which enables those who have lost a loved one to  
173 grieve in a natural manner rather than suppressing it until a later time, which can be  
174 detrimental both physically and emotionally. Many who grieve find it helpful to keep a  
175 journal or tell their story again and again. Most hospices provide grief counselling and  
176 groups. Attentive listening is very important. Friends can also help by accepting all feelings  
177 expressed, by providing practical and spiritual support, and by encouraging the bereaved  
178 to nourish and care for themselves. This is an appropriate time for good self care. Caution  
179 about major decisions is appropriate, perhaps best under taken with a clearness  
180 committee.

181 Intense grieving of a major loss changes us profoundly. Conscious grieving can open us to  
182 gratitude, greater compassion, and a centeredness in our confidence that we can weather  
183 life's storms. Each individual grieves in their own unique way. While grief is not a  
184 pathology, Overseers should be alert for complicated grief, which might lead to depression,  
185 sleeping problems, changes in weight of persons grieving, or suicidal thoughts. A Friend or  
186 Friends with a gift for accompanying those who are grieving should offer to  
187 worship/pray/listen with them on an ongoing basis, perhaps decreasing in frequency over  
188 eighteen months or so. They should be prepared to tell those grieving about helpful  
189 literature and community resources such as professional bereavement counselors and grief  
190 support groups.

### 191 **Unexpected Death**

192 Unexpected death by suicide, accident, overdose, or homicide is shocking. Discovery of a  
193 body by a family member or close friend can lead to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder  
194 (PTSD). There is a stigma attached to these losses which can compound them with a sense  
195 of shame and a reticence to ask for help. The grief process for traumatic loss may require  
196 professional psychiatric care as well as strong spiritual support. If the deceased is a  
197 member of the meeting, some intentional group process may be helpful and strengthening.  
198 [See suggested internet resources.]

### 199 **Death of a Child or Young Person**

200 The death of an older person may be accepted as a normal part of the order of  
201 things. Death of a fetus, baby, child, or young adult is more difficult. The death of a child  
202 can raise feelings of grief, unfairness, guilt, or abandonment/punishment by God. We are  
203 not just grieving a loss, but the loss of a lifetime un-lived. The world seems out of joint.

204 It is profoundly sad when teenagers and young adults, just preparing for their lives, die  
205 from opioids or other drugs, suicide, or eating disorder. Friends may assume that our  
206 children, raised in a warm and loving community, are safe from these dangers, but this is  
207 dangerously naïve.

208 The anticipated joy of a birth may be unexpectedly turned to devastation when a baby is  
209 born with conditions incompatible with life, or when such conditions result in the end of a  
210 pregnancy whether by natural causes or by choice. Many parents choose to continue to

211 commemorate the lives of these children each holiday and they should be supported in this  
212 as a healthy grief process. [See suggested internet resources.]

### 213 **Suggested Internet Resources**

#### 214 **Legal Services:**

216 American Bar Assc.

217 Mexican Bar Assoc.

218 The Balance—How to make a trust.

219 Prepare for Your Care—Advance directives forms and guidance

#### 220 **Palliative & Hospice Services:**

221 Resources can come through most hospital liaisons, healthcare plans, and physician  
222 groups.

223 National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization

#### 224 **Mortuary Services:**

225 Resources can come through most hospital liaison groups, hospice programs, and  
226 personal referrals. Some have gotten a prepaid program at local mortuaries or  
227 groups such as the Trident Society. Green burial is becoming increasingly available.

228 Final Passages—Green burial and home funeral organization

229 Learn Religions—Green Burial

230 Science Care—Organ and body donation

231 Religion.about.com

#### 232 **Bereavement Groups:**

233 These groups can cover many different grief situations including suicide and other  
234 unexpected losses.

235 **The Compassionate Friends** - Support after the death of a child

236 **AARP Grief and Loss Resources** - Support after the death of a senior

237 **National Widower's Organization** - Support for men grieving a loss

238 **American Foundation for Suicide Prevention** - Support for suicide survivors

239 **Griefnet.org** - Support for adults grieving a loss

240 **<http://www.crossingthecreek.com/>** A resource for accompanying the dying