

Sharing our end of life stories – discovering Quaker understandings of dying and death

Quaker Life Representative Council 15 – 17 April 2016



Resources

Quaker resources

Quaker faith and practice, 5th edition, Quaker Books (2013) ISBN: 9781907123559

Zélie Gross, *With a tender hand: a resource book for eldership and oversight*, Quaker Books (2015) ISBN: 9781907123719.

Funerals and Memorial Meetings [Volume 2 of the Eldership and Oversight Handbook Series] Quaker Life (third edition: 2012) ISBN: 978-1907123344.

This is who I am: Listening with older Friends [Volume 9 of the Eldership and Oversight Handbook Series] Quaker Life (2004) ISBN: 978-0852453513.

Resources for children, especially the publications *Journeys in the Spirit*, can be found on the Quaker website, www.quaker.org.uk, following the Children and young people tab on the menu bar [Issue 49 of March 2011 concerned death and dying].

Quaker groups

Quaker concern around dying and death has the purpose of facing realistically and exploring today's concerns around the end of life and dying: spiritual, emotional, social, medical and legal, www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/quaker-groups/quaker-concern-around-dying-and-death.

Friends Fellowship of Healing has some relevant publications on its website at www.quaker-healing.org.uk.

Quaker Social Action (QSA) Their **Down to Earth** project is a practical service helping people living on low incomes to have the funeral they want at a price they can afford. They also offer some guidelines and tips that can help to make things a bit easier, www.quakersocialaction.org.uk/Pages/Category/down-to-earth.

QSA also run the **Fair funerals** campaign to persuade the government and the funeral industry to do more for those in funeral poverty.

Quaker Fellowship for Afterlife Studies The fellowship aims to provide a forum for discussion on issues such as survival of consciousness and continuing spiritual development beyond physical death, personal spiritual communication, near-death experiences, www.quakerfellowshipforafterlifestudies.co.uk.

Other groups

for those wishing to organise a 'death café'

The Church of England provides resources at <https://churchofenglandfunerals.org/gravetalk/>. The Grave Talk Facilitators Guide ISBN: 9780715147023 and Grave Talk cards ISBN: 9780715147030 can be obtained from Church House publishing at www.chpublishing.co.uk.

for those planning for the future

Compassion in Dying supports people at the end of life to have what they consider to be a good death by providing information and support around their rights and choices. In particular they have good information and help in preparing powers of attorney and advanced directives (see below), www.compassionindying.org.uk.

Natural Death Centre is a social, entrepreneurial, educational charity that gives free, impartial advice on all aspects of dying, bereavement and consumer rights, including funerals, www.naturaldeath.org.uk.

for the bereaved

Child Bereavement UK supports families and educates professionals when a child dies and when a child is bereaved, www.childbereavement.org.uk.

The Compassionate Friends offer grief support after the death of a child, www.tcf.org.uk.

Gone forever offer resources for children and young people coping with bereavement, www.goneforever.org.uk.

Cruse Bereavement Care is there to support you after the death of someone close, www.cruse.org.uk (for England and Wales), www.crusescotland.org.uk (for Scotland).

Taking the first steps

Wills: making a will ensures what happens to your money and possessions. Citizens Advice can help or consult the simple guide on the government website, www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/relationships/death-and-wills-s/wills-s (for Scotland), www.gov.uk/make-will (for England and Wales).

Funeral wishes: it is good to share your wishes for a funeral with your family and your meeting. Elders and overseers or a funeral adviser can help. There is a form setting out the appropriate information at www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/quaker-roles/elders-and-overseers. You may also wish to consider paying for your funeral in advance through a funeral plan made in conjunction with a funeral director.

Powers of attorney: a Lasting power of attorney' (LPA) enables friends or relatives to act for you. There are two different types of LPA. One covers personal welfare, the other property and finance. They operate only when the person concerned is unable to make decisions. An LPA is not effective until it is registered with The Office of Public Guardian, www.publicguardian.gov.uk (for England and Wales), www.publicguardian-scotland.gov.uk/power-of-attorney (for Scotland), for which there is a charge.

Advance directives: these, formerly known as living wills, set out the medical treatments to which you do or do not consent. They should be discussed with a doctor and a card noting the advance decision should be always carried.

Organ donation: consider this possibility and register your intention on the NHS donor site, www.organdonation.nhs.uk/register-to-donate/, where other advice is available. Visit www.organdonationscotland.org (for Scotland) or www.organdonationwales.org (for Wales).

Suggestions for Meeting House Libraries

Quaker books

Diana Lampen, *Facing death*, Quaker Books (1979) ISBN: 978-0852451380 – although out of print, this Quaker classic is well worth finding secondhand.

Quentin Fowler, Paul & Barbara Henderson, Judy Kessler, Jill Page (editors), *Assisted dying: a Quaker exploration*. Leeds Area Quaker Meeting (2016) – a series of essays addressing the subject from a variety of approaches and experiences.

John Yungblut, *On Hallowing one's Diminishments*. Pendle Hill Pamphlet 292 (1990) – a lifelong student of mysticism explores the experience of contemplative prayer in facing many forms of diminishment including aging and death itself.

Kirsten Backstrom, *In Beauty: A Quaker Approach to End-of-Life Care*. Pendle Hill Pamphlet 355 (2001) – a moving essay written lovingly through stories and highlighting Quaker forms of faithfulness which are important to the process of caring for others at the end of life and for learning from death and facing one's own mortality.

Warren Ostrom, *In God we Die*. Pendle Hill Pamphlet 385 (2006) – offers deeply-considered insights on the end of life as well as reflections on the role of spirituality in how we face death.

Further Pendle Hill Pamphlets address the issues around death and dying – information from www.pendlehill.org/learn/pamphlets-book. A number of other classic Quaker texts have sections which relate to suffering and loss, including Thomas Kelly's Testament of Devotion and Jocelyn Burnell's Broken for Life.

General books

Atul Gawande, *Being mortal*. Profile books (2015) ISBN 978-1846685828 – a book about the modern experience of mortality – about what it's like to get old and die, how medicine has changed this and how it hasn't, where our ideas about death have gone wrong.

C.S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed*. Faber (1960) – still a classic: invaluable as an insight into the grieving process just as much as it is as an exploration of religious doubt.

Max Porter, *Grief is the Thing with Feathers*. Faber (2015) ISBN 978-0571323760 (hardback) – part prose and part verse, the drama of a father and sons coping with loss – funny, warm and real.

Anthologies

Neil Astley (editor), *Staying Alive: Real Poems for Unreal Times*. Bloodaxe Books (2002) ISBN 978-1852245887 – poems fired by belief in the human and the spiritual at a time when much in the world feels unreal, inhuman and hollow.

R V Bailey and June Hall (editors) *A Book of Love and Loss: Poems for Today*. Belgrave Press (2015) ISBN: 9780954621520 – a collection of contemporary poems for all who experience loss and seek comfort through poetry.

Agnes Whitaker (editor) *All in the end is harvest*. Darton, Longman and Todd (1984, reprinted 2010) ISBN: 9780232516241 – a classic collection for the bereaved, from which many have drawn comfort over the years.

Professional books

Christine Hindmarch, *On the Death of a Child*. CRC Press (third edition: 2009) ISBN 978-1846194030 – provides practical advice and much-needed reassurance that whatever contact the reader has with the bereaved, and however inadequate they may feel to the task, they can make a difference.

J. William Worden, *Grief Counselling and Grief Therapy: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner*. Routledge (fourth edition: 2009) ISBN 978-0415559997 – not only a fantastic reference guide but written in such a clear and sensitive way it would be helpful for anyone struggling to understand their own grief or the grief of others.

Books for children

Pat Thomas, *I miss you: a first look at death*. Wayland (2009) ISBN 978-0750260824 – children's feelings and questions about the subject are looked at in a simple but realistic way.

Warren Hanson, *The Next Place*. Waldman House Press (1997) ISBN 978-0931674327 – an illustrated book that tackles what happens after death in a comforting and beautiful way.

Rachel Rivett, *Are You Sad, Little Bear?: A Book About Learning To Say Goodbye*. Lion (reprint, 2013) ISBN 978-0745964300 – for the very young – exploring and asking questions can bring comfort and hope.

Alan Durant, *Always and Forever*. Picture Corgi (2013) ISBN 978-0552567657 – for the very young – learning to value the memories of those we have lost.

Ordering books

The staff at the Quaker Centre Bookshop are also happy to make further recommendations. Any books in publication can be ordered from:

The Quaker Centre Bookshop

Friends House

173-177 Euston Road

London NW1 2BJ

Tel: 020 7663 1030/1031

Email: quakercentre@quaker.org.uk

Online shop: <http://bookshop.quaker.org.uk>

For titles no longer in print, the Quaker Bookshop recommends using www.abebooks.co.uk