

Funerals and Memorial Meetings

Volume 2 of the Eldership and Oversight
handbook series

3rd edition

QUAKER
books



Funerals and Memorial Meetings

2012 revised edition

QUAKERbooks

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*This form can be photocopied, adapted, or downloaded from www.quaker.org.uk/funeral-wishes-leaflet. Sensitivity is needed when handing out the form or advertising its availability, and care when storing the filled-in form, which is confidential. The meeting should make clear which Friends (at least two) should be given the filled-in forms. When Friends move, an opportunity should be offered to revise it with the aim of forwarding it to the next meeting.

Preface to the 2012 edition

The questions that face us

One of the few certainties for any of us is that we will not live forever. In spite of this, few of us really consider what we would like to happen after we die. How might our passing be marked? Marked in a way that honours our lives, our relationships and our faith?

What about those left behind? How will they be supported, with many and unfamiliar feelings? They may have no experience of organizing a funeral, indeed they may never have attended a funeral of any kind. What help is available? What information and experience can they call upon?

What are the responsibilities of our meetings? To listen in love, to uphold in prayer, of course, but what experience can we draw on? Can we help in practical ways too? How do we apply our Quaker commitment to sustainability, equality, truth and simplicity?

How can we follow Advices and Queries to “accept the fact of death”, “make arrangements in good time” and so be “freed to live more fully?”

This handbook along with a funeral coordinator can, together, address these and many more questions.

A new edition of Funerals & Memorial Meetings

Since the previous edition was published in 2003, there has been a noticeable increase in the cost of funerals, and many more choices to make. The main text is just a reprint with minimal changes, but this preface and the resources pages at the end offer more current information.

Within the publication, reference is made to the Committee for Eldership and Oversight (CEO), which has now been laid down. Quaker Life staff at Friends House can respond to enquiries. Readers will notice the older nomenclature: preparative meetings

are now local meetings, and monthly meetings are now area meetings. Details for helpful organisations and websites were correct in March 2012.

All references to *Quaker faith & practice* are to the fourth edition.

In chapter 6 it is suggested that a leaflet should be prepared for the occasion. There is a simple general leaflet that can be given out at funerals or sent out beforehand, download from www.quaker.org.uk/outreach-leaflets.

The role of funeral coordinator

Funeral directors are skilled and have the necessary resources and information to help you at every stage. But how does someone just bereaved find and choose a director? What has to be discussed? What can be afforded? Is the funeral director knowledgeable about Quaker funerals? The bereaved do not have to make the first approach alone.

In this book (see Section 2), we assume that someone – a friend, family member, neighbour, overseer, member of the meeting – may help the person responsible for the funeral. In an area or big local meeting, one person may be appointed (see Section 1.3) and on the meeting's contact list, thus easy to get in touch with.

Or someone may be fulfilling this function on an ad hoc basis, aided by the coordinator's information collected and kept easily available. A box or folder containing Funerals and Memorial Meetings, leaflets from funeral directors, cemeteries and crematoria, printouts from the internet, and some of the publications listed at the end, could be reviewed and updated annually. Full details of the Quaker burial ground, if any, and any other details particular to the local meeting, should be included. The location of this folder could also be noted on the contact list!

Costs

The cost of a funeral varies greatly according to the services booked (see Section 3.5). In 2011 the average spent was £7,248 [Guardian, 14 September www.guardian.co.uk/money/2011/sep/14/cost-of-dying-rises-bereaved-families].

Newspaper announcements, refreshments, venue and coach hire can take costs much higher. The Consumers' Association in February 2012 [go to www.which.co.uk and search for 'funeral' for much useful guidance] found the lowest budget funeral, with very limited services, cost £1,959.

Costs and full details should be displayed and easily available, however the websites of some funeral directors, cemeteries and crematoriums do not list fees, because there are so many variables: one has to ask. It is essential to feel that staff care for the client, and good funeral directors and cemetery staff do indeed fulfil that calling. However, when sympathy and kindness are so appreciated, it can be very difficult to say that, nonetheless, one is going to 'shop around' and compare prices.

This is when a friend, family member or someone in the Meeting, such as the funeral coordinator, can help. It only takes a couple of hours to check websites, following up with telephone enquiries. If there are nearby funeral directors, a visit might take another hour or two. If the coordinator collects preliminary information then the bereaved have a starting point. They can make their own choices and carry on from there.

Hiring a venue for a gathering afterwards can be expensive: a Meeting House is likely to be free to its own members, or making a low or nominal charge. Charges at a Quaker burial ground may be lower than in a cemetery, covering just the labour involved.

Sustainability

The phrase 'green funerals' suggests wicker coffins and woodland burials, but our Yearly Meeting's growing understanding of sustainability takes us further than Section 3.4.3. As well as processes that can affect our climate, the land available is limited. Coffins may be transported from the other side of the globe, and most tombstones are imported as blanks from the Far East. Materials used may support traditional agriculture (Lakeland sheep's wool, Somerset willow, Bangladesh bamboo). Some coffin manufacturers provide vital training and employment as social enterprises or Fair Traders. The funeral directors' practices are

significant. Does your chosen company abide by the Environmental Policy of their professional organisation? How fuel efficient are their vehicles? Embalming may be recommended, but should be unnecessary unless repatriation is required; the chemicals used, along with any materials that are not biodegradable, would be excluded from a natural burial.

When considering natural burial grounds, we should look beyond any ultimate tree planting: are the burial plots planned to waste as little land as possible? When the land is full, how will it be used? Is the long-term funding solid if it is to be managed as woodland for timber, or agricultural use, or for a charitable purpose?

Location is important: how much fuel is needed for travel to the funeral, and for later visits?

Cremation does require fuel, but strict regulations do limit emissions into the atmosphere. New technologies such as cryomation and resomation may in future offer the most sustainable processes yet. However, these technologies will be as unfamiliar as cremation was 140 years ago, and will require openness of mind, as would the reuse of existing graves.

It has to be admitted that sustainable funerals, like earth burials, will probably cost more than a cremation. One solution (lower cost as well as more sustainable) may be DIY funerals, but they may need ingenuity and time to organize: for more information see the Resources list at the end.

A local Quaker Living Witness or other environmental group may already have explored various local sustainable options.

Dying well

This handbook explores what we can do – whether we face the completion of our own lives, or accompany others towards death. Behind these practicalities, lie centuries of experience and tradition of living well and dying well, of the search for profound meaning in community. George Fox* “felt the cold strike to his heart as he came out of the meeting [for worship]”

but said to Friends “I am glad I was here.” We can assume he had sorted debts, regrets, forgiveness, his will and any unfinished business, as was common practice near death then, for he went on to declare “now I am clear, I am fully clear”. Ellwood describes how “in the time of his outward weakness, his mind was intent upon.... the universal love of God”. “All is well”, said Fox to the friends he had called to him, as he “grew weaker and weaker in his natural strength”. On the third day, in the evening, “he quietly departed this life in peace, and sweetly fell asleep in the Lord.”

As is still common among Friends today, there was a meeting for worship a few days later, “attended by the Lord’s blessed presence... in which a great many testimonies were given concerning him” and then the crowd went to the burying ground near Bunhill Fields where “his body was decently committed to the earth; but his [memory] shall remain, and be everlastingly blessed.”

To know we have been loved, to be clear, to trust those who have care of our body and, in due course, the funeral: that is our hope, our witness, and the simple service we hope to offer, as friends, to one another.

*George Fox Journal, ed. John L. Nickalls, Thomas Ellwood’s account (1691) of his last three days and funeral on pages 759-760, some of which is quoted in *Quaker faith and practice* 21.49.

1

Introduction

Friends¹ should come to a funeral with both heart and mind prepared. We want to experience a deep sense of communion with God and with one another, which we hope will comfort and strengthen those who mourn. There are at least two aims in our worship: to give thanks to God for the life that has been lived, and to help the mourners to feel a deep sense of God's presence.

Hardshaw East Monthly Meeting Elders & Overseers,
1986, *Quaker faith & practice* 17.01²

- 1.1 If the heart and the mind are to be free to worship, mourn and comfort, then all the organisation of a Quaker funeral or memorial meeting has to be sensitive, prayerful, efficient and unobtrusive. There is so much to remember and do, yet time is short. Each funeral and each memorial meeting will need to be planned individually, the organisers have to be flexible, yet there are certain legal, practical and Quaker requirements.
- 1.2 *Funerals and memorial meetings* brings together the experience and advice of over eighty Friends and meetings, to amplify and complement chapter 17 of our book of Christian discipline, *Quaker faith & practice*. The Committee on Eldership & Oversight is most grateful to all those who have contributed, sharing their experience

¹ Quakers are those in formal membership of the Religious Society of Friends, and often refer to each other as 'Friend': the two terms are interchangeable. They worship in, and are members of, a local or regional 'meeting'.

² Full details of all publications can be found on page 42.

with others in Britain Yearly Meeting. We hope that this book in the eldership and oversight series will help readers not only to respond appropriately when a death occurs but also to make sensible preparations.

- 1.3 This book is addressed primarily to funeral coordinators in Quaker meetings: it is hoped all meetings will appoint at least one funeral coordinator who will be given a copy of this handbook. Those responsible for oversight and eldership, whether specifically appointed or not, the next of kin and those who are taking thought for their own deaths will find this a useful book, too. Funeral directors and the staff at a crematorium or cemetery may also find this book helpful when working with Quaker clients.
- 1.4 Throughout the book we have assumed that a funeral or memorial meeting, with a meeting for worship after the manner of Friends, and under the care of the meeting, is being planned. A Quaker funeral or memorial meeting may be organised for a member or attender, or sometimes it is the mourners who are most closely linked to Friends. However this book may also be of use when Friends experienced in organising such gatherings are asked to help with a religious but non-denominational funeral (the meeting not being formally involved); they may be glad to give this service. All concerned need to be agreed on what kind of event is being planned.
- 1.5 The preparation for a funeral is in many ways similar to that for a memorial meeting, and the practicalities often overlap. There is no rigid distinction between the two in this book, and the terms are sometimes interchangeable.

- 1.6 A good funeral may be our last service to the one who died, and a precious gift to those who grieve. It makes demands on each of us, and is not a light task, yet it can be one of the most rewarding of our duties. An elder wrote, 'I was given the strength at that time; it was a real gift of grace in answer to my prayers. I was able to do what I was required to, with the dignity and composure that is not my wont. I have never forgotten the experience. *Quaker faith & practice* 26.04, in the words that Caroline Fox heard, says "Live up to the light thou hast and more will be granted thee." Truly God speaks...'

2

Responsibility and delegation

- 2.1 This volume of the series on eldership and oversight is concerned principally with offering information and advice to elders, overseers and those responsible for oversight and eldership where the tasks are shared. The essential guidance given in chapter 17 of *Quaker faith & practice* is elaborated in this book. We have included a form which could be deposited with the meeting, indicating the wishes of the living about the manner of their funerals: see pages 50–53.
- 2.2 When someone dies it is important that loving support and sympathy are offered to the bereaved. It is equally important to offer practical help, for any death results in a chain of practical actions with which the bereaved may be unable to cope unaided. Burial in a Quaker burial ground may be requested. The funeral or memorial meeting may be under the care of a Quaker meeting.
- 2.3 The person ultimately responsible for decisions and for the costs of the funeral may be a spouse, partner, parent, sibling, child, close friend or relative, colleague, neighbour, executor or solicitor. We have used various terms for this person, most often ‘next of kin’. When a death occurs, it may not be immediately clear who this responsible person is, and sensitivity is needed in liaising with those close to the deceased.

- 2.4 Monthly meetings, according to *Quaker faith & practice* 17.07, are responsible but for practical reasons usually delegate responsibilities. *Quaker faith & practice* 12.12f gives the responsibility for the meeting for worship on a special occasion to elders – perhaps specially appointed for the occasion. Section 12.13q reminds overseers of the duty to respond to the needs of the bereaved. Delegation may be to monthly meeting elders as a whole, or to overseers, to a sub-committee of those responsible for oversight and eldership, or to a funeral arrangements committee or burial ground committee constituted in some other way. Delegation may be on a preparative meeting basis. In some meetings the Registering Officer for marriages is asked to be responsible for funerals also.
- 2.5 The method by which such Friends are appointed should be kept under review, and the members of the meeting should be regularly notified of the names of those Friends appointed to carry out these responsibilities – see *Quaker faith & practice* 17.08. In the interests of simplicity we refer to the appointed individual or group in this booklet as the funeral coordinator. The Committee on Eldership & Oversight, in using this term, is not recommending any particular practice or terminology.
- 2.6 There is no one correct way for a monthly meeting to carry through such delegation. What is essential, however, is that the agreed procedures within each monthly meeting are both clearly understood and faithfully followed, for there is a wide range of tasks to be undertaken speedily, together with others that may be appropriate in certain circumstances. Sensitivity and flexibility are needed in carrying out these tasks, but clarity of responsibility will

always be essential. Perhaps the first task of eldership and oversight is to ensure that the delegation of a monthly meeting's responsibilities for funerals is thoroughly understood by Friends within that meeting.

3

Thinking ahead to one's own funeral

- 3.1. It is advisable that all Friends consider in life certain material issues that will be consequent upon their death, as *Quaker faith & practice* 4.22 reminds us. Notable among them are the making of a will, the preferred method for the disposal of the body, and the form of remembrance that seems personally preferable. Each of these items is dealt with in turn below. To formalise these personal choices, and to make them readily available to the funeral coordinator, Friends should be encouraged to make them known in advance to the funeral coordinator, solicitor, next of kin, or preparative meeting clerk, as appropriate. (*Remember that the will is sometimes not read until after the funeral is arranged.*) A photocopyable form for such advance planning is on pages 50–53. The role of those responsible for oversight and eldership in these matters is to encourage Friends to make such choices and to ensure that the meeting is aware of their wishes. By so doing they will facilitate the ultimate funeral arrangements, and the bereaved will be helped to make the decisions that will inevitably be painful to face immediately after a death.

- 3.2 Because of life's uncertainties Friends have always recognised that wills should be made in times of health and strength of judgement so as to prevent the inconvenience, loss and trouble that their dying intestate may cause to relatives and friends. Apart from financial bequests, there are other points to be covered that are relevant to

organising the funeral or memorial meeting. In particular any special wishes for the disposal of one's body should be indicated in one's will, though this should be supported by further specific actions. It is also helpful to indicate that any funeral is to be conducted after the manner of Friends: this applies equally to the wills of non-Quakers who so desire, so that the request can be considered promptly. The will, therefore needs to be read before the funeral is arranged. Those likely to plan the funeral need to know where the will is kept.

3.3 However, it may not be possible for practical reasons to carry out precisely all the wishes of the deceased. Also, the first priority is to support those who are grieving: the needs of the bereaved may have to take precedence over the wishes of someone now dead.

3.3.1 In 1999, the U.K. government decided against introducing a statute law on Living Wills, but its policy paper on mental incapacity offered a clear statement of the present common law situation regarding Living Wills (also known as Advance Statements):

Living Wills are legally binding

The government respects the right of people with capacity to be able to define, in advance, which medical procedures they will and will not consent to at a time when that individual has become incapable of making or communicating that decision. The courts have approved this principle and have determined that certain forms of Advance Statement already

have full effect at common law. The judgements in *Re T*, together with those in *Airedale NHS Trust v Bland* in both the Court of Appeal and the House of Lords indicate that an advance refusal of treatment which is ‘clearly established’ and ‘applicable in all the circumstances’ is as effective as the decision of a capable adult.

3.3.2 Advice and a form of wording for a Living Will may be obtained from a number of organisations, including the Natural Death Centre, (See Publications page 42, also useful websites and organisations, page 44).

3.4 Foremost for consideration is the preferred method of disposal of one’s body. There are four main methods.

3.4.1 Burial is not as easy to arrange as it once was. Where a Quaker burial ground is available, any wish to be buried there needs to be noted. *Quaker faith & practice* 17.11-13 should be consulted. Where the use of a local churchyard or cemetery is contemplated, prior consultation with and the agreement of the appropriate authorities are desirable. Alternatively, burial may be on privately owned land: the owner’s permission should be sought (see *New natural death handbook* for this and other detailed information, in the publications list, page 42 and useful websites and organisations, page 44).

3.4.2 Cremations, because they involve the use of publicly owned facilities, demand little in the way of prior agreement, and arrangements will largely

be finalised only after death. However, the wish for cremation and for the place of disposal of the ashes should be covered in the will, and the wish made known to the meeting before death (see 3.1 above).

3.4.3 'Green' burials involve the same actions as do traditional burials but facilities vary round the country, so they may take a little more time to research and organise. Green and woodland burial grounds are discussed in detail, with a list of more than 180 grounds, in *The new natural death handbook*. (see publications list, page 42 and useful websites and organisations, page 44).

3.4.4 Gifts of bodies or organs for medical research are becoming increasingly common. Arrangements must be made in advance with the appropriate medical authorities, and details included within the will and/or in the form deposited with the meeting. It should be borne in mind that a body may not be accepted for medical purposes and may be returned to the bereaved: furthermore the remains may be returned for burial or cremation after their medical usefulness has been exhausted. For both these reasons, any will that includes this option should choose a second method of disposal to accommodate these circumstances.

3.5 The Quaker belief in that of God in every one and our resulting testimony on equality can be seen in the plainness of our burial grounds and the uniformity of any stones – see *Quaker faith & practice* 15.20, also 20.27-36. Simplicity is another testimony which would influence how we plan the funeral. Our reverence for life and concern for

the integrity of creation would encourage Friends to find out about 'green' burials and biodegradable coffins. Costs can be very high, and need to be borne in mind. In 2003, the average complete cost for a basic funeral started at £1,500. A burial is usually more expensive than a cremation, burials in London and other major cities can be much more expensive than elsewhere. Most funeral directors (the term 'undertaker' is seldom used now) offer only a 'package' funeral, and it may be difficult to obtain a simple bespoke funeral. Funeral directors who will provide simple, inexpensive funerals are listed by the Natural Death Centre. Although codes of practice and charters should ensure that those organising a funeral are given full information, including fees and the provision of a simple or basic funeral if wanted, it can be hard for those recently bereaved to take in all the information and make an unhurried choice. Funeral coordinators can help by keeping a file of information and brochures, including local addresses and typical price lists.

- 3.6 The preferred form of remembrance may be an issue that concerns some people. The choice includes: an entirely private funeral, with or without a meeting for worship, organised by those close to the deceased; a meeting for memorial or thanksgiving under the care of the Quaker meeting before, at, following, or entirely separate from the burial or cremation; a simple remembrance by Friends in the meeting for worship on the following Sunday. The wish for any one of these need not, of course, preclude the possibility that a second option may also be implemented, maybe at a later date.

4

Preliminary planning of funeral

- 4.1 There are certain necessary actions consequent upon a death within a meeting that need to be taken immediately. *What to do when someone dies* and similar books (see publications list, page 42) give comprehensive guidance on legal and other requirements in England, Wales and Scotland. In this book we concentrate on the Quaker aspects.
- 4.2.1 It should be noted that a death must be registered within FIVE days. The following may register a death, in this order:
- A relative of the deceased
 - A person present at the death
 - The occupier of the house or institution where the death took place IF there is not anyone more qualified to register
 - The person who is arranging the funeral (that is, the person instructing the funeral director)
- Funeral coordinators may find it helpful to visit a Registry once they have been appointed and before their services are required.
- 4.2.2 Whoever hears of such a death should inform the funeral coordinator who should then ensure that the following actions are taken by Friends within the meeting, some of whom will have already been

appointed for such purposes and some of whom will need to be selected on a personal basis by the funeral coordinator:

- offers of condolence to the bereaved
- giving of practical help as necessary to the bereaved, including:
 - help in notifying relatives, friends and Quakers
 - helping the bereaved with funeral arrangements

4.3 The funeral coordinator, knowing the wishes of the deceased as deposited with the meeting (see pages 50–53), should then arrange a meeting with the next of kin or those charged with making funeral arrangements. It may be advantageous for the funeral director to be present at this meeting. The matters to be discussed and agreed are also summarised in Table 1, on page 39.

4.4 There may be a problem if the deceased had little connection with the meeting, or the next of kin know nothing about Quaker ways. It would be wise to check what is possible or appropriate, before any discussion with the spouse, partner or other appropriate person. For example, if the Quaker burial ground is small, space may be limited to those with a close connection with the meeting. If use of the Quaker burial ground is not possible, there could be a funeral elsewhere under the care of the meeting, or a private event can be arranged with the support and advice of the funeral coordinator.

- 4.5 Some mourners at the funeral may need special consideration when planning, for example those travelling from abroad, those who are house-bound or disabled in one way or another, children and young people who may attend for only part of the funeral or need care elsewhere. Their needs and wishes may not be obvious: as far as possible, they should be consulted directly.

5

Detailed planning of a funeral

- 5.1 The actions following the first meeting with the next of kin and/or funeral director lead imperceptibly into detailed planning of the funeral. Further meetings may be necessary with close family and friends, and will be essential with the supervisor of the crematorium or cemetery.
- 5.2 If a Quaker burial ground is to be used the funeral coordinator should notify or meet with the monthly meeting Friend authorised to issue orders for burial or the scattering and interment of ashes, and find out the local procedures. Monthly meeting elders should be notified if a non-member has expressed a wish for a funeral held in the manner of Friends.
- 5.3 Where a crematorium or a cemetery is to be used, it is essential for the funeral coordinator to meet with the staff and supervisors; this meeting may also involve the next of kin and the funeral director. The following matters should be resolved:
 - 5.3.1 Details of time and timing of the funeral should be agreed; it may be necessary to arrange a suitable compromise, particularly since only 15-20 minutes may be allowed for a service in a crematorium (it may be possible to book a double session).

- 5.3.2 At a burial the location of the grave should be visited and the availability of diggers confirmed.
 - 5.3.3 The procedures at a crematorium governing the curtains, music, microphone and loop-system should be understood.
 - 5.3.4 The seating arrangements should be inspected and, if possible, amended to meet any anticipated special needs.
 - 5.3.5 The needs of any children known to be attending should be considered.
 - 5.3.6 If there are any religious symbols considered to be undesirable, it should be established whether they can be moved or covered.
 - 5.3.7 The funeral director and supervisor should be made fully aware of the way in which the funeral will be conducted, including the silences, and the manner in which it should be closed.
 - 5.3.8 The funeral director and the next of kin should be made aware that there is no Quaker equivalent to a minister's fee; if, however, contributions are made, their distribution should be agreed in advance.
 - 5.3.9 If there is to be a collection, its distribution should be agreed in advance.
- 5.4 At this same meeting, the funeral coordinator should check parking arrangements and public transport facilities. Toilet facilities should be noted, and wheelchair access explored.

6

Planning of the meeting for worship

- 6.1.1 Planning of the details of the meeting for worship, and indeed any memorial meeting, will overlap with the funeral details, and the whole process will in practice form a continuum. All programmed items should be settled in advance by the funeral coordinator, see *Quaker faith & practice* 17.04 and 17.09. They may include readings, prayers, music, tapes and prepared ministry: in each case the individuals concerned should be aware of the desirable timing of their contributions.
- 6.1.2 It is not possible to give specific advice on dealing with death by suicide as each case is unique. The families of those who have taken their own lives have to cope with feelings of distress which go far beyond normal grief and so extra sensitivity is of paramount importance. Each meeting has to decide the right holding of the memorial meeting. See the list of publications on page 42 for reading matter which may be helpful.
- 6.1.3 Friends may choose to produce leaflets of information to be handed to all who attend the funeral: these may include details of the manner of Quaker worship, and practical information about arrangements such as hospitality after the funeral. Such leaflets should be prepared and obtained before the meeting for worship. Similarly,

if a leaflet for remembrance is to be distributed it should be prepared and printed in good time. Such leaflets help the family take an active part in planning the event; they are something to look at if the silence is found difficult; they recall memories of the occasion and can be sent to people unable to be present. Short personal reminiscences of the deceased can be included in the leaflets, as can appropriate Quaker or other quotations.

- 6.1.4 Finally, public notices of the memorial meeting should be drafted, agreed with the next of kin and placed with the press and in *The Friend* as requested.
- 6.2 Where a meeting for worship is held at a crematorium the order of entry must be decided in advance (coffin, mourners, family) as must the provision of a stand for the coffin. Towards the end of the meeting, the timing of the removal of the coffin and the drawing of any curtains need to be agreed. The doors should be opened for the worshippers to leave after the shaking of hands, not after the curtains are drawn. Funeral directors and crematorium staff need to be kept informed where Quaker practice differs from other kinds of funeral.
- 6.3 Where a meeting for worship is held at a graveside or at a chapel attached to the cemetery, the order of arrival must be decided as must arrangements for and timing of the lowering and covering of the coffin. Access to the graveside may be particularly difficult for the chair-bound and infirm, and it may be helpful to provide garden chairs.

- 6.4 If a meeting for worship is to be held separately from the funeral its location must be agreed, whether at the home of the deceased or of a relative, at a meeting house, at a church or chapel, or at some other venue. So must its timing, which could be before disposal, when the coffin may or may not be present, immediately after disposal, or at some later date.
- 6.5 Wherever the meeting for worship is held the funeral coordinator will need to ensure that individual Friends agree to help. The Friends who will act as elders must undertake to be present and should decide amongst themselves who will open and close the meeting, explain what will happen to those unaccustomed to Quaker meetings, and make any necessary announcements. Doorkeepers should be agreed upon, and it should be ensured that enough Friends are available to keep the meeting. Someone should be responsible for flowers, perhaps a relative, friend or member of the meeting. It may be helpful for someone to record ministry for the deaf or absent, and for another either to sit with someone unable to be present through infirmity or disability, or to visit afterwards to describe the funeral.
- 6.6 Children may wish to attend all or part of the meeting for worship and funeral. Elders should ensure that, as far as possible, the young are given full information and helped to prepare for the event (see *Quaker faith & practice* 12.12.i). One or more Friends should be ready to respond to their needs, as parents and carers may be too occupied with their own grieving and the business of the funeral. A crèche or other childcare should be offered.

- 6.7 Refreshments may be offered after the funeral. The location used, the nature of the invitation, the provider of the refreshments, and the arrangements for payment should be clarified by the funeral coordinator.

- 6.8 Finally, it is sensible to nominate and brief a substitute in case of the funeral coordinator's sudden indisposition.

7

Duties on the day

- 7.1 Following a cremation, the next of kin may wish to receive the ashes; it is possible that the funeral coordinator may be asked to scatter the ashes at a later time. If so, the coordinator should check if any permission from the landowner is needed; also the wind direction at the time. The ashes should be in a container suitable for scattering. This can be provided by the crematorium, often in the form of an upright plastic urn. Caskets are more suitable for a burial.
- 7.2 If the preliminary planning has been comprehensive the funeral coordinator should otherwise have a straightforward programme on the day of the funeral. The coordinator should arrive early (wearing a reliable watch) and, where a meeting house is involved, check that the doors are open, that the heating is on if needed, and that the loop-system is operative. The coordinator should then check that all the relevant papers, leaflets, readings and any programmed elements are to hand.
- 7.3 As people arrive the funeral coordinator should check that the helpers are present, should greet arrivals, particularly non-Quakers and, if necessary, ensure that the bereaved are cared for.
- 7.4 The funeral coordinator may have no special part to play in the meeting for worship, where the appointed elders take the lead, nor at any subsequent refreshments, which may have been organised by a refreshments committee. The coordinator should concentrate on not fussing, and

should trust to the efficiency of those to whom the various tasks have been delegated.

- 7.5 The Friend who introduces the meeting for worship will devise the appropriate wording, bearing in mind the advice given in *Quaker faith & practice* 17.01-06, the needs of those unfamiliar with a Quaker meeting, and the circumstances and personality of the deceased (see the following pages). It is important that everyone knows what to expect at each stage and that any young people and non-Quakers know that they can offer spoken ministry if they so wish.

8

Introducing and closing the Meeting

The Committee on Eldership & Oversight has received a number of suggestions from individuals and meetings covering the main points to be included in an introduction and closing to the meeting for worship, and some phrases that have proved effective in practice. It is vitally important that the name of the deceased is lovingly mentioned at the start of the introduction and that a sense of loving warmth is created by the introduction. The following extracts may be adapted, or may prompt other ways of introducing and closing.

Welcome, and thank you all for joining us today. This funeral is to be held in the manner of a Quaker meeting for worship; this means there is no appointed minister and no set order of service. During the meeting it is open for anyone to speak who feels moved to do so; such ministry is helpful and to be welcomed. It is best if contributions are brief and time allowed for reflection between them. Even without speaking, what we can all bring to this occasion is our presence in a loving and sympathetic spirit. Towards the end the curtains will be drawn and there will follow a further short period of silent worship before the meeting is concluded by the shaking of hands. Let us now gather in a spirit of quiet trust and dependence on God, to pray together, to uphold one another, to share our sadness but more especially to celebrate and give thanks for the life of AB (or for the grace of God as shown in the life of AB).

All who are gathered together here are asked to enter into the silent communion of prayer.

There is no minister to lead us with a set form of words, but God is present in this place, and God will listen to each one of us and will hear our prayers, whether they be spoken or silent.

Let us remember with love and deep thankfulness the life of the friend whose spirit has just passed from this earth. Let us think of the source from which the goodness of that life was drawn – the love of God, which unites in one fellowship the living and the dead.

Friends, we are gathered to remember our Friend...

We shall do this in the manner customary to Quakers...

There will be silence. Then, out of the stillness, any who feel led may stand and speak, remembering that there may be others who also have their message to impart.

If you are not familiar with this form of worship, do not feel discouraged from saying what is in your heart to say – for all are equal in the sight of God.

Some members of her/his family of whom she/he was very fond, and to whom she/he was very dear, are unable to be with us today. They will be with us in spirit and we shall remember them especially in our prayers... (mention by name).

The meeting will close after about minutes with the shaking of hands, and the curtains will be drawn across.

We have found the following Celtic blessing useful as a closing prayer where the deceased has had a troubled life and/or a distressing illness, and also where the family and friends present hold a variety of religious forms of belief:

Deep peace of the running wave to you;
Deep peace of the flowing air to you;
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you;
Deep peace of the shining stars to you;
Deep peace of the Son of Peace to you.

And so death has come to our Friend. His/Her hopes and ideas we commit into our minds and wills; his/her loves we commit into our hearts; his/her spirit has long been abroad in the world. We commit his/her body to its natural end.

9

Tasks afterwards

- 9.1 After the proceedings are over the funeral coordinator has a number of routine tasks to perform. The death should be entered in monthly meeting records and noted for the revised list of members; it should also be included in any records associated with the burial ground. The Yearly Meeting offices should be notified so that Yearly Meeting records can be amended, and in case the deceased was on any national committee. If possible, enclose a list of those committees. The funeral coordinator should also help with the circulation of personal leaflets to people unable to attend, and be prepared to help the next of kin, if desired, manage the settling of any expenses and with the details of any burial stones.

- 9.2 The needs of the bereaved will continue to be in the minds of overseers and other Friends in the weeks and months after the death, see especially sections 22.80-95 of *Quaker faith & practice*. Some may wish for privacy in their grief, but may well value continued contact with members of the meeting by visit, letter or telephone. Others may not want to be left alone, and some may need company but find it difficult to reach out. Friends will try to be sensitive to different or changing needs. If necessary, however, bereavement counselling should be arranged (see useful websites and organisations, page 44), while further practical help may be welcomed in a variety of matters. These include help in placing and paying for an announcement in *The Friend*, disposal of possessions and help with transport. The bereaved may also value help

in claiming or changing state and occupational pensions, bank accounts, building society accounts, covenants and subscriptions, in paying bills and in notifying membership organisations especially if the deceased has held office in them. Then the bereaved may wish to acknowledge of letters of condolence, but may be overwhelmed if these run into hundreds, and may welcome any offer of help, at least by addressing envelopes.

- 9.3 Overseers need also to be alert to possible financial difficulties. These may be most acute in the months until probate is granted. When changes in income take effect the bereaved may need some time to adjust to the new financial regime, and tactful support may be welcomed.
- 9.4 Death brings grief, bewilderment, anxiety and even perhaps anger to those who are bereaved. These feelings are not short-lived, and may indeed increase as time passes: the young may be particularly vulnerable. The first response of a meeting must be to provide sensitive care and support from those best able to offer it, in the belief that a loving sharing of these mixed feelings will bring healing in time. It is a duty of oversight to ensure that this help is being provided and continues for as long as it is needed.

10

The direct experience of Friends and Meetings

- 10.1 The following paragraphs are direct extracts from contributions sent by many meetings. Some are taken from the notes of guidance used by local funeral coordinators. Others are from leaflets or minutes addressed to members and attenders. Some Friends have written of their own personal experience. These accounts and insights are included here in the hope that they will be of help to readers. They are given without attribution, and verbatim except for very minor editorial changes to allow for consistency of presentation.
- 10.2 ‘It is of primary importance that the next of kin and close friends of the deceased are aware of the loving, thoughtful and caring support of the meeting. The coordinator, and others who have contact with them, should seek to convey our desire to discern and to carry out their wishes to the best of our ability. At the same time, it is the elders (through the coordinator) who have experience in the conduct of Quaker funerals and it is their duty to guide the family to a choice that will be most satisfactory, both for them and for the rest of the meeting.’
- 10.3 ‘A funeral is an important event for us all, as it reminds us that death is part of life and we ourselves will die

some day. It is not necessarily a sad occasion. For instance when death comes to someone who has had a long and fulfilled life, we can readily give thanks for that life. But death always means loss and for that we grieve – and need to grieve – so that in the process our feelings of loss and personal deprivation can become thankfulness for a life well-lived and our more negative (and inevitable) feelings of irritation with that person in life become mellowed into acceptance of her or his imperfections, and our own guilt at not having done more becomes something which can be forgiven. So a funeral is for the benefit of the living, and can be a deep spiritual experience. It is with this in mind that we need to get the practical details right.’

- 10.4 ‘A funeral is for the benefit of the deceased, family and relations, Quakers, friends, or for strangers.’
- 10.5 ‘The funeral provides a dignified occasion for the disposal of human remains and underlines the importance of our bodies in life as well as in death. It provides a ritual no matter how simple it may be; this is of importance to most people irrespective of their religious belief or lack of belief. It provides some solace, comfort and perhaps hope to those close to the deceased. It is an opportunity for Friends and friends to remember and give thanks to the Lord for the grace shown forth in the life of the departed. It is a witness or testimony of Quaker faith and trustfulness to non-Quakers.’
- 10.6 ‘We should attempt to ensure that our funeral arrangements match up to our spiritual needs at the time of bereavement.’

- 10.7 ‘No two occasions are ever alike. We have known a large chapel and its gallery to be filled, with people sitting in the aisle and even in the sanctuary around the coffin, and the doors open with others listening from outside... and we have “kept a meeting”, just the two of us, to say farewell to a body that has been used for three years by a university department for research. The majority are small gatherings of kind, sympathetic people who are invariably appreciative of our small services. We find it a gentle and rewarding office to perform for Friends: especially as we are confident that the deceased Friend will probably be with us in spirit at the time.’
- 10.8 ‘We have recently had the funeral of a stillborn child. Panic-stricken, I asked one of the local clergy for help (thank goodness for good ecumenical relationships!) and though the prayer sent needed some modification there was enough to start the paralysed brain working. We found it was important in this case to refer at all times to the child by name and to bear in mind her potential which we felt was not lost though we could not see it develop.’
- 10.9 ‘There has been a problem when Humanists and others with no religious practice or faith (as far as one knows) request Quaker funerals, perhaps thinking that our silent meetings and lack of liturgy mean we are non-religious. Some preparative meetings have agreed to this request. In other meetings elders have tried to make sure the whole monthly meeting is aware that a funeral is a meeting for worship and part of our spiritual heritage. We have established friendly relations with the local Humanist group and now recommend referral to them when a non-religious funeral is sought.’

- 10.10 ‘Sometimes the person enquiring does want a religious funeral of some kind, though the deceased did not attend a meeting, or indeed any church. For example, “my father went to a Quaker school, where he was very happy, and then he was a conscientious objector”; “my sister subscribed to *Quaker monthly*, and always said she’d be a Quaker if she lived here”. A meeting for worship can then be the right kind of funeral, though great care is needed in preparation, and sensitivity in helping the bereaved understand what we can offer, and what we cannot. It is not an opportunity for outreach!’
- 10.11 ‘All meetings are different and we must assess the kind of people likely to be present and the likely spirit in the meeting. After all, there may be a large non-Quaker presence.’
- 10.12 ‘Quaker meetings are meetings for worship, based on waiting in the spirit. We tend to think of ministry as spoken words, but ministry can also be in music, in flowers, in movements and in actions... The silence is the foundation of the worship, not a form.’
- 10.13 ‘Some meetings agree guidelines and stress the importance of silence. However, music is permitted in moderation [in ours]. In one case that meant very modern pop music which did not seem out of place for a burial of a young man with such interests who had loving and very genuine friends.’
- 10.14 ‘The value of vocal prayer at a funeral can hardly be over-emphasised. If offered under guidance it will often touch hearts too much distressed to listen to an address and will bring real comfort. This is above all to be borne

in mind where there is some special ground for sorrow, when the anxious mourners may thus be helped to open their hearts to the healing stream of the divine love.’

- 10.15 ‘At a recent funeral, the minister had prepared the service very thoroughly. She was aware of problems within the family, and at the crematorium gathering, attended by just a few after the large public service, she said, “If any of you have regrets about anything you have said, or that you meant to say and didn’t, if you have any unfinished business, then take a few minutes to think of it now, and then recognise that this is the time to lay it down for ever.” I would like to feel that we could help Friends to handle situations of that kind, since the funeral provides a unique opportunity to take leave in more senses than one.’
- 10.16 ‘The absence of the body of the deceased at a memorial meeting combined with, usually, a greater period of time between the death and the meeting makes the occasion emotionally easier than a funeral for the family and close friends. What might be called “words of comfort ministry” at funerals are much less common – and perhaps less acceptable – at memorial meetings. Ministry tends to come only from among those who knew the deceased. The meeting ends with the appointed elders shaking hands. It is appropriate for such meetings to be well publicised; many Friends will have been active and known in a variety of fields and the presence and ministry of persons from this wider circle and their ministry can add fresh insights, while also being helpful to them.’
- 10.17 ‘At one funeral, a young man commented “Lots of flowers and no coffin – how nice”, after such an arrangement.’

- 10.18 ‘We believe in the Society as a community – it is the Religious Society of Friends – and therefore it is fitting to attend the meeting for worship, to remember, to give thanks and to take leave of Friends who have died. It is the last service we can offer, a tribute of respect, and it matters to the group (the preparative meeting) as it is a service to them too, for it strengthens them; see *Quaker faith & practice* 17.04. There is also need for the presence of others, and their attendance in a loving and sympathetic spirit is a very real ministry.’
- 10.19 ‘As I am notorious for my view that ministry should only be given when one finds oneself giving it perhaps my exhortations that weddings and funerals are the only occasions where it is one’s duty to come prepared to minister, even if the preparations remain in pocket or handbag if not needed, have more weight. Because we are in a holiday and retirement area it does happen that we are called on for the funeral of a Friend whom we do not know. On these occasions I have found that Friends rally round, and posting reliable people ready primed can save the situation. I salve my conscience by reminding myself that the deceased would understand and my prime concern must be the family.’
- 10.20 ‘A teacher helped a child with learning difficulties prepare for his mother’s funeral: they talked about her suicide, about life, and death, and love; what happens at a funeral; and how he felt about his mother and his own loss. And then, at the meeting, the teacher read a poem chosen by the child, with the child’s own introductory words. If only we could all be given such sensitive help in preparing ourselves! How can we help those who

might have difficulty speaking, through emotion, or disability, or some other inhibition?’

- 10.21 ‘We have found it best if the elder who is introducing confines his or her remarks to a description of what is to happen, while a second elder is ready with an agreed reading or other ministry after a suitable break. If the introducing elder does both, there may be a long gap afterwards. This does not matter in itself, but spoken ministry may then start uncomfortably close to the time at which we are required to finish.’
- 10.22 ‘Acting as a funeral coordinator does make demands on your emotional core which might come as a surprise, so you need to have thought about funerals, to have participated earlier in a minor capacity, and to have some sort of guidelines to follow.’
- 10.23 ‘Obviously, by my age I have experienced a number of deaths of relatives and close friends, and during that time my feeling towards the final ceremony has changed from personal private sorrow to the feeling that this is the last thing I can do for the person who had died – a tribute of respect, a feeling of solidarity with other friends present. It is also something I can and need to do for myself, that is to recognise that the familiar presence is no longer there, and that I go on without the external support, but with the knowledge of that person’s influence and what it has meant to me over the years. In this respect, my mother’s funeral was the catalyst. I didn’t go to it, because I had just been married and was living in Hong Kong, and she died in England. Furthermore, she hadn’t been expected to die, and she had just spent six months with us. But I’ve always wished I had

been able to be there, and since then, for people I've had a special relationship with, I've always tried to go to their funeral.'

- 10.24 'When we turn to *Quaker faith & practice* 12.12.f, we read that one of the duties of elders is to take responsibility for the right holding of meetings for worship on special occasions such as funerals. In this monthly meeting we are all elders, and, accepting this responsibility, we should read through carefully chapters 12, 17 and 22 of *Quaker faith & practice*, and note that we are authorised to hold meetings for worship on the occasion of a death – either at the crematorium, or at a burial in our burial ground, or at a memorial meeting, usually at a later date.'
- 10.25 'The person appointed as funeral coordinator may not feel able to or wish to arrange a particular funeral or memorial meeting for a variety of reasons which may include: just wishing to be a mourner, feeling too affected by the death, being unhappy about the relationships with the family or the deceased, or having been recently bereaved themselves. It must always be easy to ask somebody else to be responsible.'

Table 1 – Preliminary planning

TO CONSIDER	TO DECIDE
disposal of body	decide on method
preferred place, date and time of disposal	decide whether choices are practicable, and if so obtain agreement of responsible authorities
attendance	decide whether funeral is to be limited by invitation, or to immediate family and friends, or open to all; decide if funeral is to be a meeting for worship under the care of the meeting, or a ceremony arranged by the next of kin with the support and help of individual Quakers
likely numbers and any special needs	decide whether numbers can be accommodated and whether special needs can be met.
flowers	decide whether there are to be flowers, wreaths, etc.
programmed readings and music	decide whether these are thought desirable
leaflet of remembrance	decide whether one is to be produced, and if it is needed before the funeral; if so decide on author, and obtain the author's agreement

preferred location and timing of meeting for worship	decide when and where any meeting for worship should be held (if separate from, or in addition to, the funeral)
refreshments	decide whether there are to be refreshments afterwards, where, who is to organise, who is to pay
later memorial meeting	decide on preferred date, time and place of a later memorial meeting (if wished); confirm practicability
notices of death, funeral, etc.	decide on content and placing of these in press, who pays; also mailing of personal letters or telephone calls, and who is responsible

Table 2 – Detailed plan

at a Quaker burial ground	confirm location, date and time, contact the responsible person listed in the local book of members and/or MM elders to find local procedures and obtain permission
at a crematorium or ground	contact staff; find out local procedures governing order of arrivals, closing of curtains/ lowering of coffin, digging a grave, music, departures, etc; modify seating if necessary, by agreement; remove or cover undesirable religious symbols if possible; brief all staff on Quaker ways; agree timings
meeting for worship	confirm location, date and time; arrange for elders, doorkeepers, etc. to be present; check availability of any needed programmed items; arrange distribution of leaflets; appoint deputies
access to all above	check public transport, travel by car, parking, toilets, access for those in wheelchairs, with visual impairments or other needs, temporary seating, shelter from rain or sun

Publications

Although this booklet focuses on funerals and memorial meetings, this resources list ranges wider, and includes some books on caring for the dying, facing our own mortality, readings, theology, grief, and caring for those who are grieving. Insights from other Christian churches and other faiths are included, for their experience can illuminate ours.

Most of the books list other relevant publications and helpful organisations.

Those responsible for oversight and eldership may wish to direct the bereaved to some items on the list and indeed to read the books themselves.

Librarians, elders and overseers should discuss which items to make available and how best to publicise them.

The Quaker Bookshop will give information on availability, price and postage of any item. The Bookshop can take orders by post, telephone, fax, or via its secure on-line shopping service. Some of the books can be borrowed from the Quaker Life Resources Room. Please telephone the central offices for details (see Britain Yearly Meeting, Organisations, page 44).

Most of the websites and organisations listed from page 44 have lists of publications which can be browsed on their websites, often with a range from practical leaflets, draft wills, to personal accounts. Cruse Bereavement Care has a very good list whose section for children and young people includes picture books for young non-readers, people with learning difficulties, teenagers; different ethnic and cultural backgrounds; different situations, including a gay teenager whose boyfriend dies.

Some local meetings may not have a library or be able to buy many publications. In such cases the monthly meeting might consider how to share materials on eldership and oversight,

and how to make publications speedily available, possibly by cataloguing on a monthly meeting basis.

Britain Yearly Meeting. *Quaker faith & practice*. Fourth edition. London: Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, 2009.

The New Natural Death Handbook, Natural Death Centre, 2012.

The fifth edition of this compendium of essential information, support and stimulating insights, including a directory of funeral directors and of natural burial grounds in the UK, and guidance on care of the dying and doing your own funeral. From the Quaker Bookshop or to buy direct from the Natural Death Centre www.naturaldeath.org.uk/index.php?page=bookshop.

Last Orders: the essential guide to your letter of wishes. Patricia C. Byron, Stellar Books 2010.

Many big charities offer downloadable forms or booklets, in which to write the many details your executors will need, but this book is big enough for all details and unlikely to be mislaid!

Useful websites and organisations

The following organisations are listed as a starting point – they all offer a variety of services and publications, and could refer you on to local branches and to dozens of other organisations. Most have websites with resources lists and far more information than can be summarised here. Funeral coordinators would find it helpful to collect some information before there is an immediate need. In particular, the meeting's funeral coordinator could have available up-to-date information such as addresses of funeral directors familiar with Quaker ways, lists of crematorium and funeral directors' typical charges, contacts for Quaker burial grounds and for nearby green or woodland burial grounds, and other relevant local details.

Browsing the internet will bring up ample information and useful websites: the following are good places to start with, most offering links to other organisations, downloadable publications and helplines.

Some statutory organisations seem to change their website addresses frequently. In those cases internet search terms have been suggested. You may wish to restrict your search to the country in which you live. At the time of this edition going to press in 2012, the government websites are:

Scotland: www.scotland.gov.uk

Wales: www.wales.gov.uk/

United Kingdom: www.direct.gov.uk

If you live in Scotland or Wales, you may need to consult the United Kingdom website as well.

Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ

See www.quaker.org.uk or call 020 7663 1000.

Quaker funerals

A short leaflet to download. It could be put on each seat at the funeral, handed out, or mailed in advance with a notice of the funeral

www.quaker.org.uk search on *funerals*.

Death and Dying

Material for children's meetings: Issue 49 of Journeys in the Spirit can be downloaded from the Britain Yearly Meeting website: www.quaker.org.uk/childrens-work-edition-series-5.

Dying Matters Coalition

This organisation brings together professionals and thousands of ordinary members, taking the government's End of Life Care Strategy seriously. Offers publications, campaigns, events, imaginative ideas for raising awareness and helping people to think ahead to their death, ways to open conversations with children, etc.. Excellent leaflets that can be displayed. Free to join: download materials, receive the newsletter.

www.dyingmatters.org

Natural Death Centre

The NDC is an educational charity that sees death as a part of life and works to empower and support those who are approaching death or who have been bereaved – strongly recommended. Information, directories, discussions.

www.naturaldeath.org.uk/

Coffins

There are many designs on the internet for coffins that a handy person could make. Search on *Homemade Coffins* or *Bookcase Coffins*.

Making a will

Search on Making a will. A local solicitor will draw up a will, but preparation is essential (and can reduce the fee). Some trades unions offer a will-writing service to their members. There are many charities and organisations that focus on particular needs, surveying factors that one might not have thought of. For example MENCAP considers provision for someone with a learning or other disability:

www.mencap.org.uk/what-we-do/our-services/wills-and-trusts

Lasting Power of Attorney

A Lasting Power of Attorney appoints someone to make decisions on behalf of someone unable to do so for themselves. Lasting Power of Attorney forms can be downloaded, and can be completed without getting professional legal advice. At the time of going to print, registration takes nine weeks and costs £260. However, if there are complicated details (such as finances) or specific instructions for the attorneys, you may want to get legal advice. Check the government websites: search for *Power of Attorney*.

Advance Decision (sometimes known as a Living Will)

Mental capacity and your right to refuse treatment are considered in full, with links to other helpful organisations. A number of organisations offer information and forms, the Alzheimers Society is a good one to start with.

Search on the government websites or www.alzheimers.org.uk for *living will* or *Advance decision*.

Organ donation or leaving a body to research

It is important to make sure that your next of kin knows your wishes about organ donation.

Go to the government website and search on *organ donation* or *body donation*.

Funeral directors, crematoriums and cemeteries

For information on funeral directors, crematoriums and cemeteries, on codes of practice and environmental policies, with pages for the general public and for those organising funerals, go to:

Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors

www.saif.org.uk

National Association of Funeral Directors

www.nafd.org.uk

Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management

www.iccm-uk.com

To find the cemetery and crematorium managed by your local authority, go to the relevant website and search for *funeral*. Fees are usually lower for residents of that local authority. Some cemeteries have arrangements for those seeking a sustainable and/or low cost funeral.

Help from the Social Fund

If you or your partner are getting a low income benefit and need help towards the cost of a funeral, you may be able to get a Funeral Payment, but it may not cover the whole cost of a budget or low cost funeral. Go to the government website and search on *Funeral Payment*.

Quaker Social Action ‘Down to Earth’

Down to Earth is a practical service helping people living on low incomes to have the funeral they want at an affordable price. See www.quakersocialaction.com/downtoearth. The service also seeks to find creative ways of helping people think about and discuss death before they have to.

Three organisations that focus on bereavement:

The Childhood Bereavement Network

www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/index.htm

The Compassionate Friends

www.tcf.org.uk

Cruse Bereavement Care

www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk

**Local names, addresses and
telephone numbers
for your meeting's notes**

Funeral wishes form



When you fill in this form, you could consult your partner or spouse, your closest relatives or friends, or other appropriate people who will be responsible for making decisions about your funeral. You should lodge copies with them, and with the funeral coordinators at your Quaker meeting.

Please continue on additional sheets where needed.

Your name:	Your Quaker meeting:
Your address:	Your telephone number:

Who is your next of kin, or will be responsible for taking decisions after your death?

Address:

Telephone number:

Who is named as executor in your will?

Address:

Telephone number:

Please give details of any additional executors on a separate sheet.

Who is your solicitor?

Address:

Telephone number:

Where is your will kept?

If it is not kept by one of the people named above, please provide their address details here.

Address:

Telephone number:

How would you like your body to be disposed of?

Cremation

Burial

Green burial

Medical research

(If you choose medical research,
please tick a second choice as well.)

Other

Please give details:

Would you like a Quaker burial or disposal of
ashes? Yes No

Any special wishes for the disposal of your ashes or
burial of your body:

Where would you want a meeting for worship to be held?

Quaker meeting house

Crematorium or cemetery chapel

Elsewhere

Please give details:

Should death notices be published?

In *The Friend*

Elsewhere

Please give details:

Who should be notified personally?

Please attach or write a list overleaf, with addresses, or say where this information can be found.

Do you wish for flowers?

- Yes
- No

Do you wish for gifts to charity?

- Yes
- No

Please give details:

Would you want a memorial meeting to be held later?

- Yes
- No

If yes, where?

Your signature:

Date:



About Funerals and memorial meetings (3rd edition)

A funeral or memorial meeting comforts and strengthens at a time of grief, enabling mourners to give thanks to God for the life that has been lived. This is a gift lovingly offered by the Quaker meeting. The practical organisation has to be sensitive, prayerful, swift, efficient and unobtrusive.

This book:

- complements *Quaker faith & practice*;
- clearly sets out the tasks of funeral coordinators and people responsible for eldership and oversight;
- will be useful if you are thinking ahead to your own funeral;
- gives information on low-cost and 'green' funerals. Funeral directors, cemetery and crematorium staff will find this book helpful when working with Quaker clients.

This is the second in a series of handbooks offering information, support and guidance to all those responsible for eldership and oversight – for spiritual and pastoral care – based on the experience and insights of Quakers in Britain. This edition has a new preface and an updated list of useful websites, publications and organisations.

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