

Thinking About the End of Life

Compiled by the Advising Friend and Clerk,
Jordans Quaker Burial Ground
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INTRODUCTION

Benjamin Franklin said that the two certainties of life are taxes and death. Most of us don't relish thinking about the latter and may find it a difficult subject to discuss with family or friends. It can be so helpful if we have thought about what is important to us and what we would like to happen when our life is nearing completion and afterwards. There are also people who are the only Quaker in the family, and when they die the family does not know what the person wanted or how to arrange a Quaker funeral if one has been requested.

The sections in this document can be completed as a whole or gradually over time. It will help to focus and evolve your thoughts and enable them to be communicated to others. It is hoped that working through this information will help you and your family and friends to begin conversations and make decisions.

Why not start now? None of us knows what will happen and when. It is easy to put off considering difficult topics, but preparation will make demanding circumstances more manageable.

WILLS

A will is a legal document that determines how your estate (money, property, possessions, etc.) will be distributed after your death.

Why should you have a will? Without it you will have died 'intestate' and it will be up to the law to decide how your possessions, money, and property will be allocated. There will probably be more tax to be paid and you will no longer have any influence on what happens. About 70% of people in the UK die without a will.

A will needs to be witnessed by at least two people, but there is no requirement to involve a solicitor. It is sensible to use a solicitor if the estate is complicated and its disposal cannot be set out clearly in a few hundred words.

So how do you do it? Here are some questions to answer that will help you plan what you need to include in a will.

1. What do I have? (Property, money, possessions)

2. Whom do I *need* to remember in my will? e.g., dependants. You may want to consider extended family relationships with a view to minimising the potential for disagreements and challenges to your will.

3. Whom do I *want* to remember in my will? e.g., family members, friends, charities

4. If I have children under the age of 18, whom do I want to appoint as guardians for them? Always discuss this with the person/s you wish to nominate.

5. Whom would I like to be my executor/s? (It is possible to appoint more than one.) This could be a family member, a friend, or a professional, such as a solicitor. The role requires clear thought, persistence, and attention to detail. Don't forget to ask the person/s if they are willing to take on this role.

6. Do I want to write my own will or use a professional? Will-making packs are available online and from shops like WHSmith. There are also will-writing services offered by many solicitors. Using a professional will attract a fee but may make your will more secure against challenge.

7. Letter of wishes. This is a letter addressed to your executors or trustees and is not legally binding but will give guidance about your preferences – for instance, specific possessions you would like to leave to specific people.

It may be useful to make a list of your possessions and the people that you would like to inherit them, to include in the letter of wishes. This could be done on this page and the next.

Possession
e.g., my jewellery

Person/s I wish to receive these
my niece Claire

POWER OF ATTORNEY

You can choose to give one or more people permission to make decisions for you. They must have the mental capacity to do this. Powers of attorney are either 'ordinary' or 'lasting'.

Ordinary POA: You can appoint someone to make decisions about your financial affairs or property for a limited time – for example, while you are on holiday or in hospital. It is valid while you have mental capacity. It is a straightforward document to create. It must be in written form and be witnessed by two people who are not related to you (and not your solicitor).

Here is more information on Ordinary POAs:

<https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/en/topics/private-client/ordinary-powers-of-attorney>

Lasting POA [LPA]: You can appoint someone to make decisions on your behalf about your health, care, financial affairs, and property. An LPA can be used immediately if you no longer want to make decisions yourself, or in future if you lose mental capacity. However, it can only be created while you still have mental capacity. An LPA must be registered with the Office of the Public Guardian. This registration can take some time, and there is a fee for the registration. You can use the forms and guidance on this website:

<https://www.gov.uk/power-of-attorney>

Or you can do it through a solicitor.

Whom might you want to assign a Power of Attorney to?

ADVANCE DECISION AKA LIVING WILL

An advance decision – sometimes referred to as an advance directive, a living will or an ARDT (Advance Decision to Refuse Treatment) – is a legally binding instruction that allows you to refuse specific treatments, even if it leads to your death. You draw it up when you are still mentally able, and it comes into play if you become unable to make or communicate decisions. It is best to discuss this with your doctor, medical team, or other medical consultant.

You can find more information here:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/end-of-life-care/advance-decision-to-refuse-treatment/>

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/money-legal/legal-issues/advance-decisions/>

<https://compassionindying.org.uk/making-decisions-and-planning-your-care/planning-ahead/advance-decision-living-will/>

ARRANGING A QUAKER FUNERAL

Quaker funerals normally take place at the crematorium or at the deceased's Meeting House. (They can also take place at Jordans Meeting House with burial/scattering directly afterwards at the burial ground.) Quaker funerals take a different form from Church of England services, though they can be attended by anyone. Essentially, it is a Meeting for Worship, conducted mostly in silence. An Elder starts the Meeting by welcoming people and explaining how a Quaker funeral takes place. After a period of silence, those attending can stand and say something about the deceased if they feel moved to do so. This is followed by a period of silence after each contribution for reflection. Occasionally, organisers make alternations, such as including readings or adding music either at the beginning or at the end. This depends upon the individual Meeting.

Families and Friends sometimes arrange a Memorial Meeting for the deceased a few months after the funeral. This is either in addition to or instead of it. This takes the same form as a funeral Meeting, but because time has passed it can be a more considered and less rushed occasion. Memorial Meetings can take place at the deceased's Meeting House, or at Jordans Meeting House if their remains were interred or scattered in the burial ground.

If you are making arrangements for a Quaker funeral, you will first need to contact the Meeting that the deceased attended and ask if there is someone who deals with funerals. If there is not, contact the Clerk of the Meeting who will help you with the arrangements. Most Quaker Meetings have a website, or Friends House in London (0207 663 1000) will be able to give you a contact.

Alternatively, you can look on the Jordans Quaker Burial Ground website (www.jordansburialground.org) if the deceased has indicated that they want to be buried at Jordans. There you will find contact details for the Clerk and the Advising Friend to the Burial Ground Committee. The latter will be able to help

you with the arrangements. Other burial grounds also have websites should you wish to contact them.

For more information on Quaker funerals:

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/support-for-meetings/funerals-1>

Other sources of information on funerals in general:

The Natural Death Centre:

<http://www.naturaldeath.org.uk/>

The Good Funeral Guide:

<https://www.goodfuneralguide.co.uk/>

Bereavement Advice:

<https://www.bereavementadvice.org/>

ADVANCE FUNERAL WISHES FOR A QUAKER FUNERAL

By answering some or all the questions below, you can help those who will be making arrangements after your death to know what you want. Do not feel you must answer every question; it is fine to leave blanks. When you have signed and dated it, place it with your important papers and make sure your family or friends know about it.

Would you like to have a funeral?

Whom would you like to arrange the funeral?

Do you have a pre-paid funeral plan? If yes, please give details of whom it is with and where the paperwork is located.

Do you have a funeral director of choice?

What sort of funeral would you like? (circle 1, 2, or 3 and answer the questions beneath)

1. Full-body burial

Would you like a standard or 'green' burial?

What type of coffin or casket would you like for burial?

Whom would you like to be the bearers of your coffin?

2. Cremation

What type of coffin or container would you like for cremation?

What do you wish to have happen to your ashes – scattered or interred?

If interred, what type of urn or container would you like your ashes to be buried in?

If you have already chosen a place for burial/interment/scattering, please state it here.

Would you like the funeral in the manner of Friends?

Where would you want the funeral Meeting for Worship to be held?
(Quaker Meeting House, crematorium, cemetery, or elsewhere – please specify)

Normally, a Quaker funeral takes the form of a Meeting for Worship. Are there any elements you would like added if it is possible? Poetry, readings, music, other? Your family and friends would want the service to reflect your preferences and would appreciate your clear written guidance here.

Would you like flowers at the funeral? If so, what sort in which season? If you wish to have flowers, you can leave the choice to the discretion of the person whom you have designated to arrange the occasion.

Do you wish to have money collected for charity? If so, which charity would you like to receive the money?

Do you want a reception to be provided after the funeral?

If you have specific wishes not covered above, please state them here.

The Elders from your Meeting will decide whether or not there will be a Memorial Meeting held for you some time after the funeral. If there is one, do you have a preference as to where it is held? Meeting House or elsewhere (please specify)

Are there any specific instructions you would have for a Memorial Meeting?

Should death notices be published in *The Friend* and/or elsewhere? (please give details)

Have you registered with the NHS Organ Donor Line (www.organdonation.nhs.uk) to have your body or organs donated?

Your signature:

Date: