



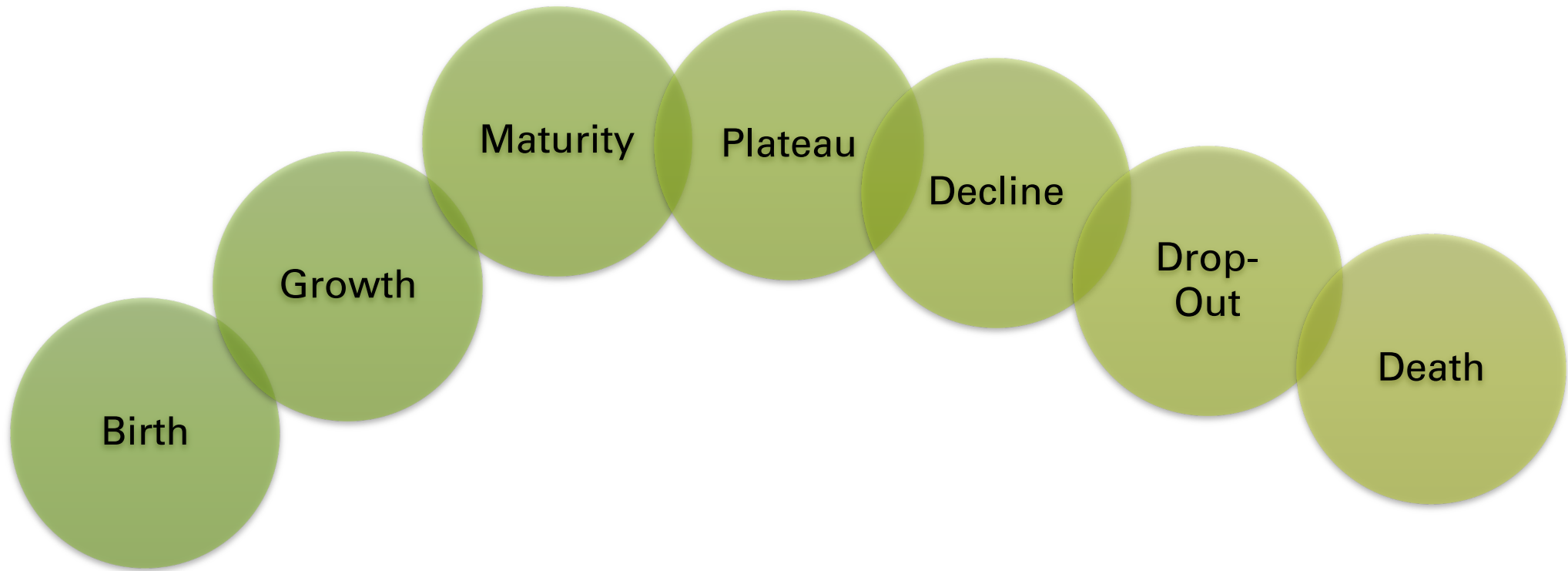
# LAYING DOWN A MEETING

Emily Provance  
eprovince@hotmail.com  
quakeremily.wordpress.com









**When should a  
meeting talk  
about its  
ending?**



# Is it time?



---

We find ourselves focusing on survival more than ministry.

---

Attendance at worship has declined.

---

We can't take on a meeting's essential functions.

---

The average age of Friends attending is over 65.

---

We don't have enough money to meet our financial obligations.

---

Trying new things is either hard or unimaginable.

---

We feel tired.

---

The Friends in our meeting are entirely separate from our neighborhood community.

---

We feel nostalgic and miss the way things used to be.

# How else might we be called to respond?

Invest in  
outreach, grow,  
and change

Reduce  
ministries

Simplify  
committee  
structures

Adjust staff

Combine/merge  
meetings

Share the  
building

Sell the building

Become a  
worship group  
or preparative  
meeting

Become a house  
church or online  
meeting





# Laying down the meeting is...

Not a failure,  
because  
every  
meeting ends  
eventually.

An occasion  
for grief and  
honoring the  
life of the  
meeting.

An  
opportunity  
to think about  
legacy.

One way to  
respond to  
how God is  
calling us.



**Say it out loud: "we might be called to lay down the meeting"**

**Commit to Spirit-led discernment**

**Worship**

**Talk about it**

**Come to clearness**

**Hold threshing sessions, for both concerns and joys**

**Give regional and yearly meetings a heads up; maybe ask for help**

**Let distant and less-active community members know what's being considered**

**Consider the meeting's legacy**

**Care for one another during the transition**

**Take on the practical and legal tasks**

**Hold a memorial for your meeting and/or write a memorial minute**



# Practical and Legal



Work with professionals



Double-check your meeting's founding documents



Consider your meeting's historical archives



Check your book of discipline



Consider the property (and talk to your neighbors)



# Emotional and Pastoral Care



Make space for grief



Find worship homes for everyone



Talk about how you'll stay in touch




Document your memories





# Resurrection and Legacy

Looking back at our meeting's history: what ministries have always been important to us? How can our resources perpetuate that work?



# Questions for Discussion

Why are you interested in this conversation?

What is one thing you've heard in this conversation that feels important?



# Additional Resources

- ["Faithful Always: Transitions and Endings for Quaker Meetings and Churches Near the End of the Life Cycle"](#) – a downloadable PDF
- ["The Life Cycle of Meetings"](#) – a themed issue of New York Yearly Meeting's *Spark* newsletter; stories of meetings in a variety of stages of their life cycles making various sorts of transitions
- ["Practicing Discernment Together: Finding God's Way Forward in Decision Making"](#) – an excellent book about discernment processes in general and how to move forward as a meeting through difficult decisions
- [The Good Friday Collaborative](#) – an ecumenical organization that supports closing congregations
- [Toward the Better Country: Church Closure and Resurrection](#) – not written for Quakers, but true stories and examples of congregational closing processes
- [Ending with Hope: Resource for Closing Congregations](#) – includes various chapters that will be helpful for specific populations, like rural meetings or historical meetings
- [Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes](#) – not about congregations but change more generally