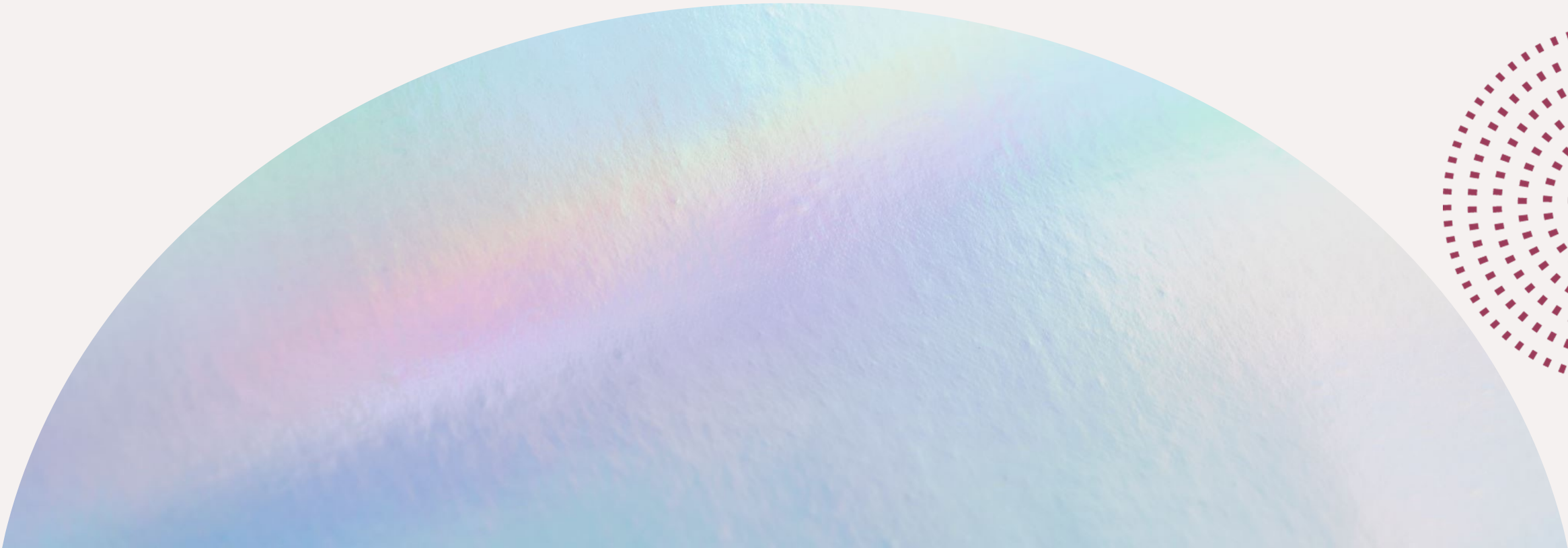
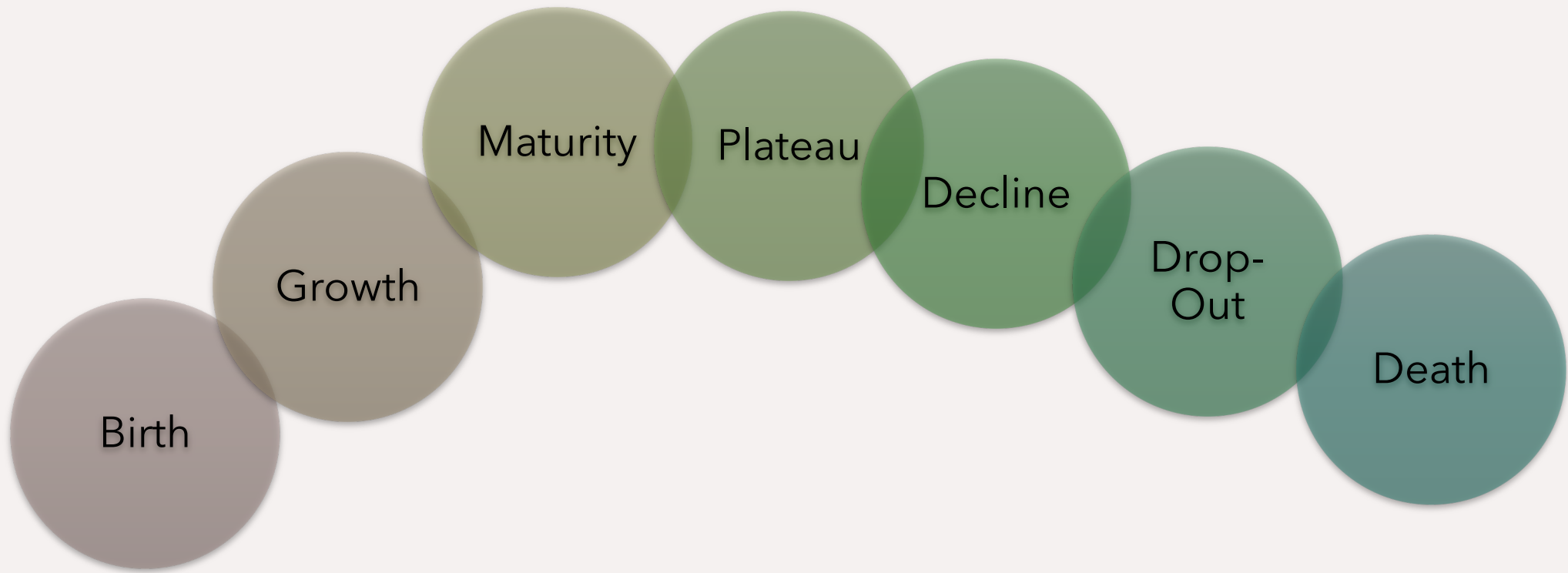




The Life Cycle of Meetings

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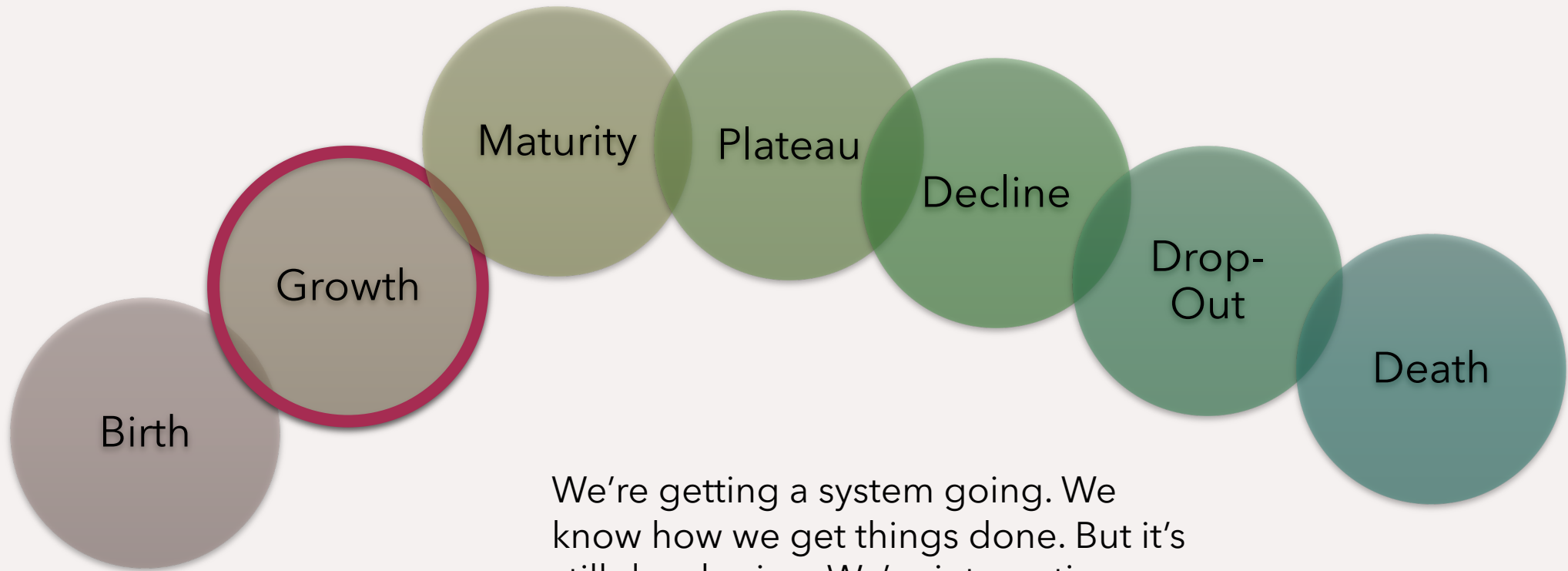




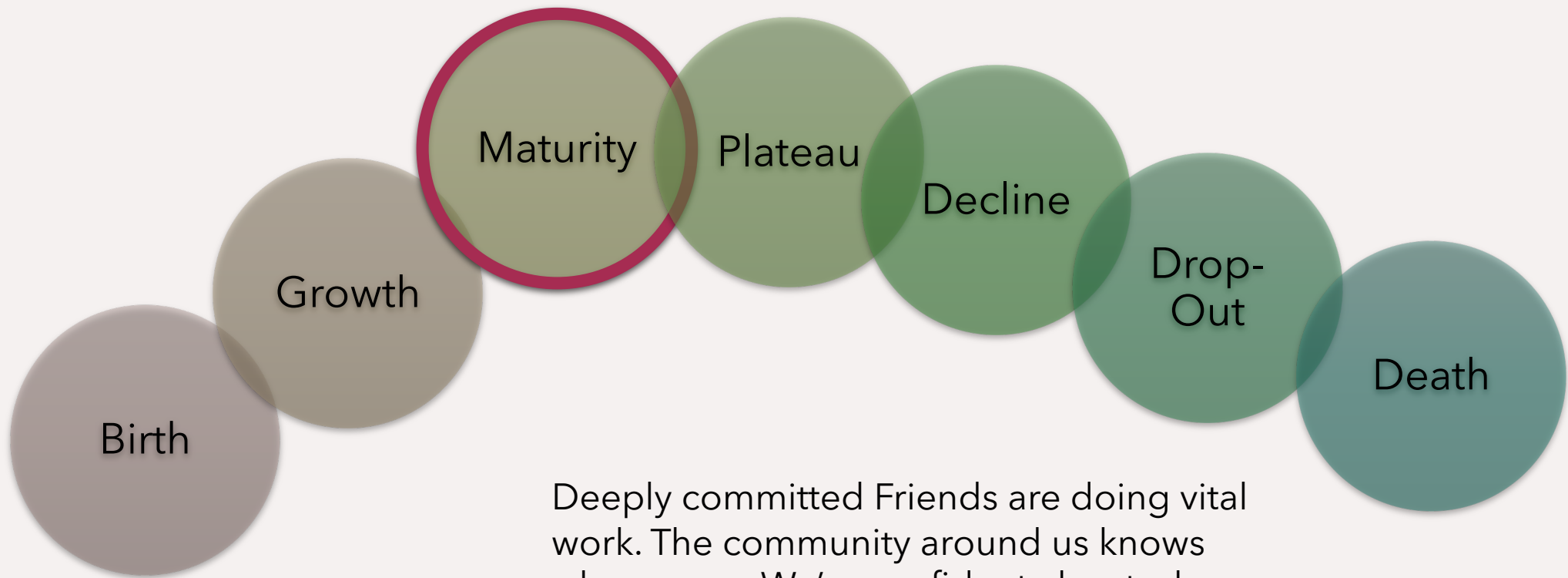


We are energized and excited about new possibilities. The meeting is born because there is an immediate need for it and leading to start it. We know who and why we are. We haven't settled the how part yet.

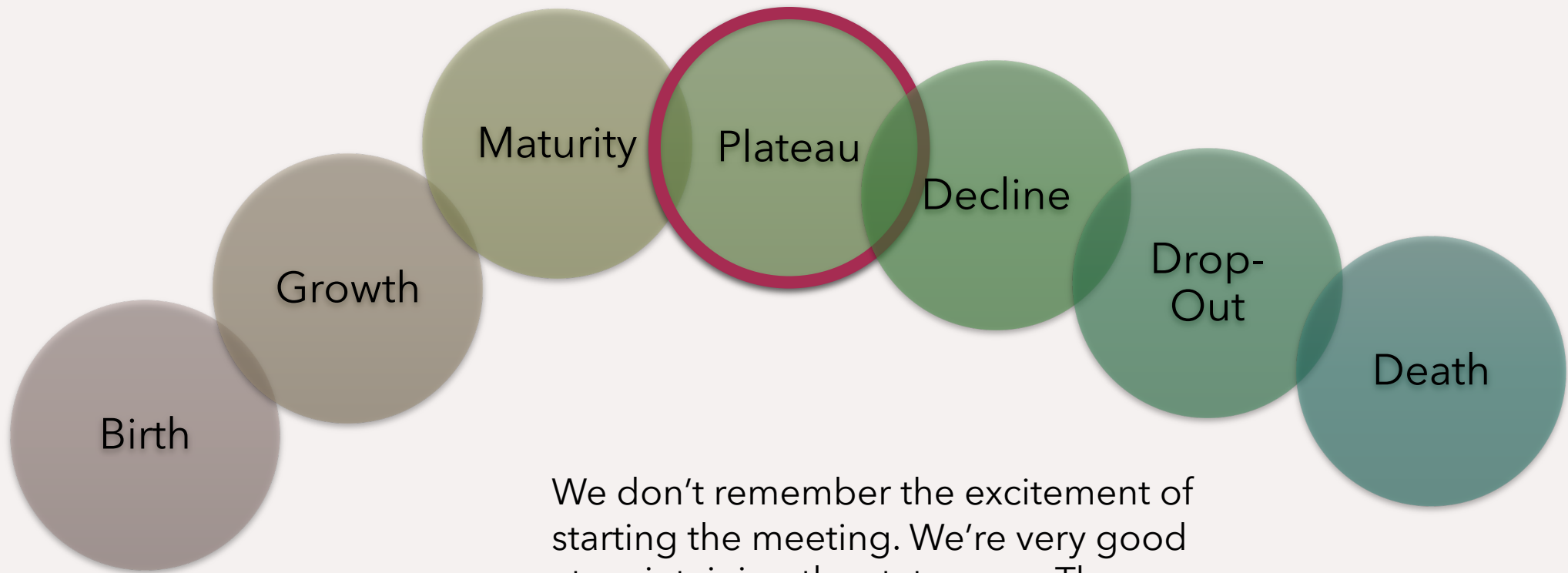




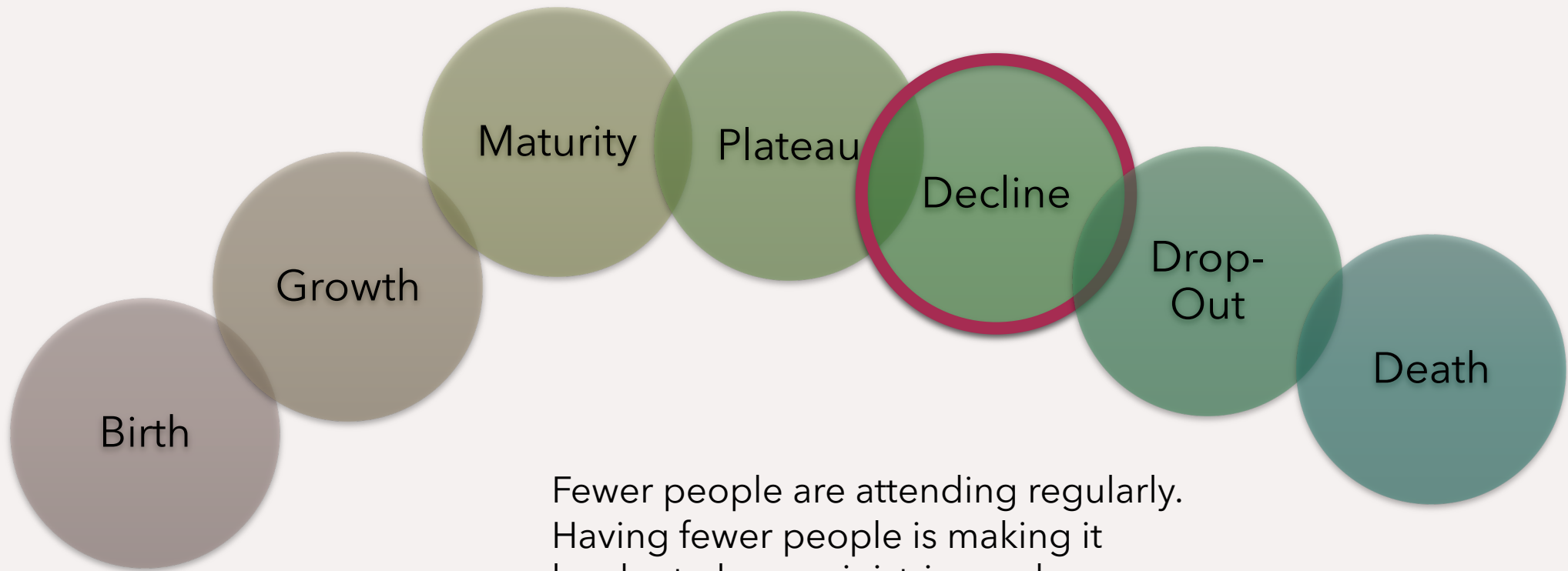
We're getting a system going. We know how we get things done. But it's still developing. We're integrating a bunch of new people and starting new ministries. Kids and parents and young adults and mature adults are all showing up. This is an exciting place to be.



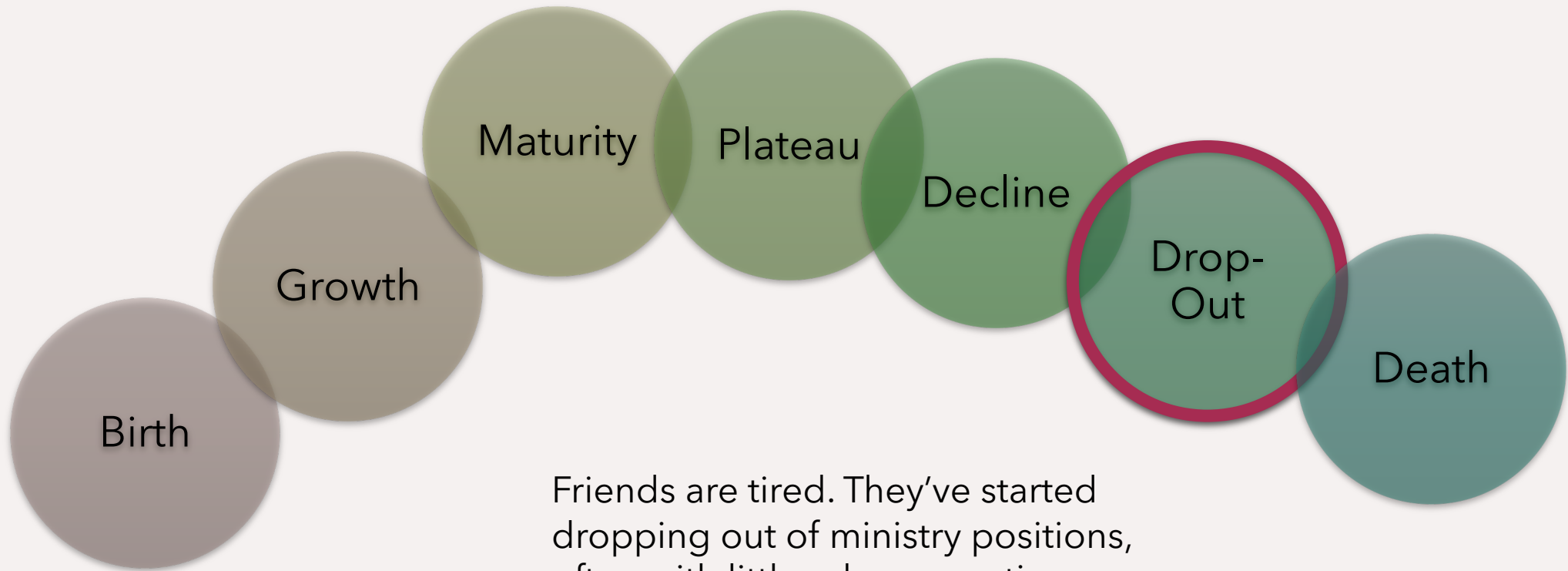
Deeply committed Friends are doing vital work. The community around us knows who we are. We're confident about who we are and feel sure we have a future. Our financial situation is solid. The average age of our members has gone up a little. **This is the most vulnerable stage and best time to reassess and change.**



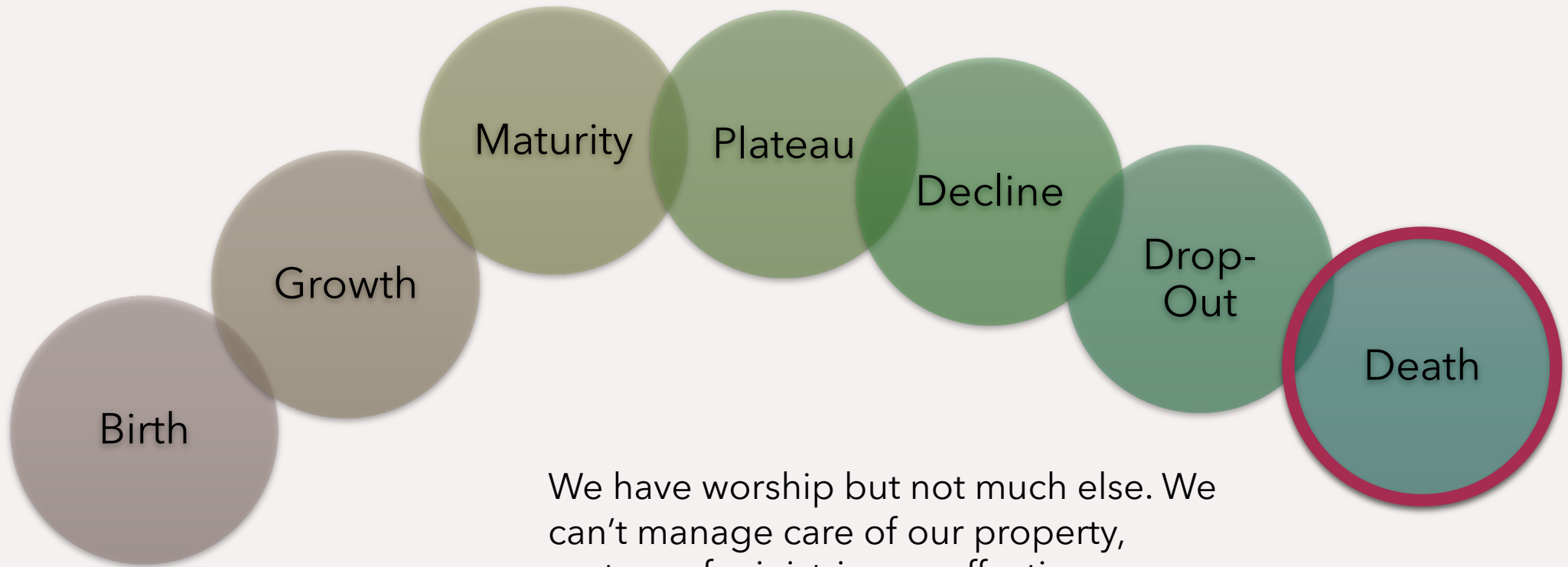
We don't remember the excitement of starting the meeting. We're very good at maintaining the status quo. The number of families in the meeting is declining, though we may be increasing in number of older adults. We don't try new and risky things.



Fewer people are attending regularly. Having fewer people is making it harder to keep ministries and programming going. Our finances are shrinking. We feel nostalgic. We might be experiencing conflict and losing our ability to maintain healthy relationships.

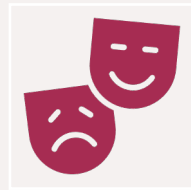


Friends are tired. They've started dropping out of ministry positions, often with little advance notice. Positions go unfilled. Finances are getting shaky, or we are spending our savings. Most of us are elderly. We cannot provide meaningful ministry to our neighborhood community.

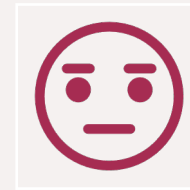


We have worship but not much else. We can't manage care of our property, nurture of ministries, or effective religious education. Holding meetings for business is hard. If our meeting will be revived, we think it will happen because new people appeared. We ourselves can't reenergize it.

Transitions



Endings




Neutral zone



New
beginnings

Assessing Where We Are



How certain do we feel about our purpose as a meeting?

Do we have thriving neighborhood ministries?

Have we been covering our routine expenses using our savings?

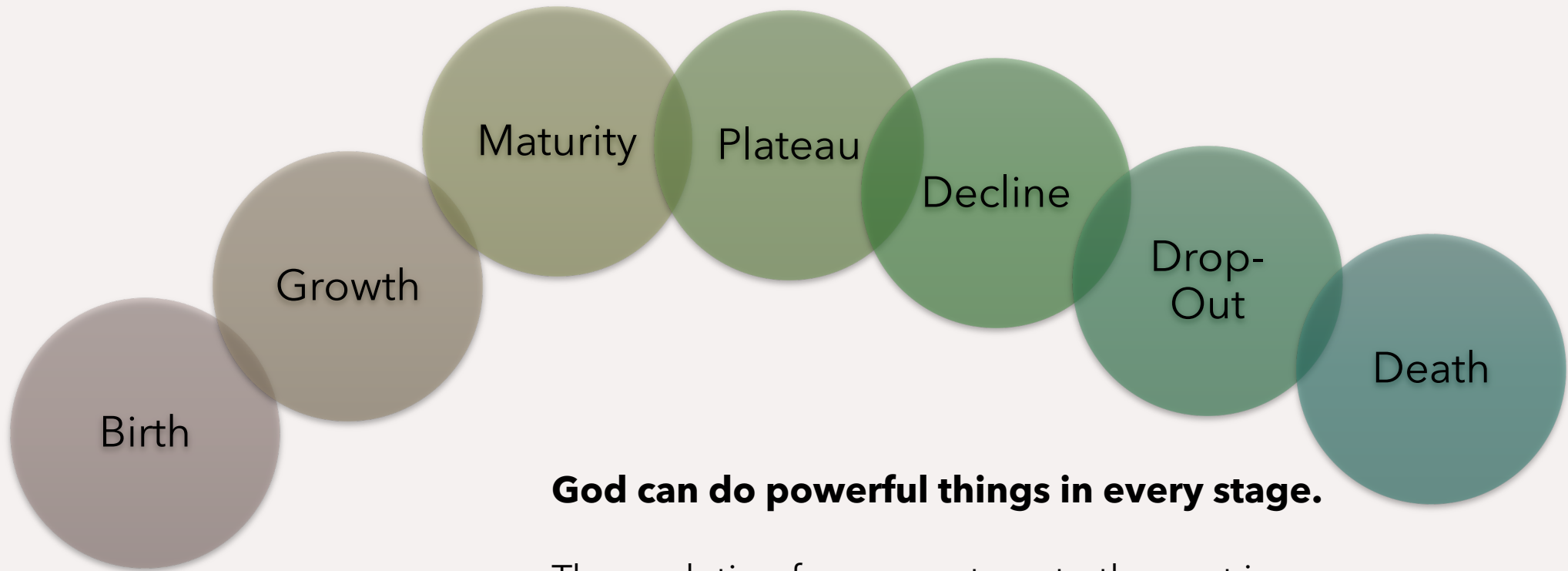
Do we feel enthusiastic and passionate about our meeting?

Is it hard to figure out who's going to do the work?

Are more Friends attending worship now than five years ago? Ten years ago?

What's the average age of Friends in our meeting?

How is religious education going—for adults, for teens, and for children?



God can do powerful things in every stage.

The evolution from one stage to the next is natural. It's about the meeting's vitality and viability, not its size and not its righteousness.

What does it mean to be faithful now?

Questions for Discussion

Where in the life cycle do you think your own meeting might be?

Why do you think that?

How does it feel to name that?

Additional Resources

- ["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
- ["Faithful Always: Transitions and Endings for Quaker Meetings and Churches Near the End of the Life Cycle"](#) – a downloadable PDF; look especially at the article "All or Nothing" on page 14
- ["Guidance for Meetings"](#) – texts and queries specifically crafted for online and hybrid meetings, published by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting
- ["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