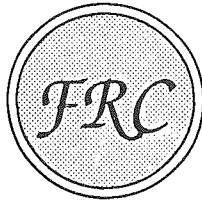


PASTORAL CARE NEWSLETTER



PUBLISHED BY THE FAMILY RELATIONS COMMITTEE
OF PHILADELPHIA YEARLY MEETING

*For Overseers, Members of Ministry and Counsel, and others involved
in pastoral care and counseling*

Vol. III, No. 2

January, 1996

FACING DEATH: HELPING PEOPLE GRIEVE

On August 14, 1994, Lydia Moore, age 38, died in an automobile accident. What follows is an interview with Tom and Anne Moore, her parents, who describe their experience of grieving and healing. Tom and Anne emphasize that when any of us experience the loss of a loved one, our experience is unique. At the same time, the experience of grieving can point to broader, more universal truths.

Our second article, by Linda Lyman, Clerk of Ministry and Counsel at Bellingham Preparative Meeting, in Bellingham, Washington, offers reflections on ways of becoming more effective in offering support to members and attenders who have lost loved ones.



Anne and Tom Moore

Tom: It was on a Sunday evening, shortly after Mother and I had taken Anne to the airport to go to New Mexico for the FWCC Triennial. I received a phone call from Jim Clendenin, the father of Lydia's spouse, Ann Clendenin, who told me that Lydia had died in a car accident in Kansas. He was in tears and soon I was in tears. In a way we had a great conversation. Soon afterwards I talked to the doctor, who told me that Lydia must have died instantly; she had been crushed in the accident. I also talked to the highway patrolman and learned

that it was an accident for which there wasn't anyone to blame. It was something that happened. And now, as I'm telling you about it, I find myself kind of living through it again.

Anne: Tom and I had very different experiences. I was in Albuquerque, on my way to the FWCC Triennial, and I learned of Lydia's death in a phone call from Tom. Fortunately I had taken with me a whole handful of family pictures to share with the cousins with whom I was staying overnight. Going ahead and looking at the pictures was very helpful. Then I had a time of being by myself. I chose to be by myself for a day, in the security of my cousin's home. And that was really a very precious gift. I didn't have to deal with anybody else's anguish. It would have been very different if I had been at home. At the same time, I didn't have the details to work with, so in a way I felt cheated because Tom was doing it all.

As I reflected alone there in Albuquerque, one of the very first things that came to my mind was

something I learned years ago from Marjorie Sykes. "What is needful?" The only thing I could think of was "I can keep loving Lydia." And that's been very helpful to me, because that's all one can do.

Tom: One of the reasons that the people in Kansas needed to phone me was that although Ann and Lydia had been married under the care of Penn Valley Meeting, that marriage had no legal standing. So as her father I was Lydia's nearest kin. Ann, who also had been in the accident, was under sedation and wouldn't be available in any real sense until the next day. There were questions about whether Lydia's remains would be cremated or buried, and many other kinds of questions. So to each of the people to whom I spoke, I had to say, "well, you know this is a couple, and they were married under the care of the meeting, and what I want to do in my legal role is whatever Ann wants to do in her real role as Lydia's spouse." I was talking to people in southwestern Kansas, in a relatively isolated, rural area, but everyone could immediately understand the situation. They didn't in any way have any difficulty with this lesbian relationship.

Anne: A little more than 48 hours after Lydia's death, Tom and I met in Kansas City, at Lydia and Ann's house. Our friends, John and Reva Griffith, mobilized things there. (It was Reva who wrote the article about Lydia in the January, 1995, issue of *Friends Journal*). We all began contacting people hither and yon. We also asked the recording clerk of our home meeting to include a note about Lydia's death in a mailing that was scheduled to be sent out to all our members.

Tom: While it's a unique experience for us, we learned that the family across the street lost a child, and so did the person down the street, a new resident, and so did many others -- all parents whose young adult children died under various circumstances.

This newsletter is published quarterly by the Family Relations Committee of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Trish Walat, clerk. Comments are welcome. Please do not duplicate. To obtain additional copies, contact Helene Pollock or Arlene Kelly, Co-editors, at 215-241-7068, or write Family Relations Committee, 1515 Cherry St., Philadelphia, PA 19103.

Anne: The meeting for worship the following Sunday, at Valley, our home meeting, was set aside to hold the Moore family in the Light. And I recommend that. A single red rose was up on the piano, and we had in hand the editorial about Lydia that had appeared in the *Kansas City Star*. We walked in and received hugs from everybody, which was the warmest welcome we could have had. And Tom spoke during meeting for worship. He had been reading the Bible that morning, and had found something about "let everything you do be done in love." It seemed that that was really what Lydia's life was all about.

Then we went back to Kansas City for the memorial service, which was preceded by morning worship at Penn Valley. Many dear friends were there for us. All the surviving family was present for the memorial service, including Lydia's two brothers and sister-in-law and her spouse Ann Clendenin, who attended in a wheel chair. All of Ann's family had come from Oklahoma City. Lydia had been a doctor, and many of her patients, the other doctors, the children from the Penn Valley Meeting, and Lydia's high school classmates, along with a number of our friends from Lawrence were there. It was just very amazing -- there were some 1100 people there. It was a Quaker meeting, opened by the clerk of Penn Valley Meeting, with microphones up front, and people standing in line to speak. It went on for almost two hours. Six weeks later the AFSC Board, of which Lydia had been a member, had a meeting for worship in her memory.

Clearly, in helping us along this unknown path on which we had suddenly found ourselves, those meetings for worship were important. Valley Meeting helped in other ways as well. The rhythm of events in the meeting helped me recover a sense of continuity -- it gave me an important focus as I continued carrying out my responsibilities as clerk. Often at the point of death, people may feel disconnected, so what they need is to get reconnected. Well we've been connected this whole time. That sense of being held -- that's what has carried us through.

Another way in which the meeting has supported us (certainly unplanned) was to provide the opportunity for both of us to talk with others in similar circumstances. There were a number of deaths, and we were each able to minis-


Services Offered by the Family Relations Committee

The Family Relations Committee of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, and the Friends Counseling Service, which is under its care, provide a full range of services to assist meetings in carrying out pastoral care. Our address is 1515 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102. Persons in PYM may contact Steve Gulick at 215-241-7068 to schedule a workshop or a consultation with a Friend who is experienced in the particular issue. The Friends Counseling Service consists of experienced, trained counselors, all of whom are active Friends whose spiritual lives are integral to their approach to counseling. Fees are adjusted according to the person's ability to pay. To contact a counselor in your area, call Deborah Osborne-Daily at 215-988-0140 or 215-241-7068.

The Family Relations Committee has published several pamphlets as resources for individuals and meeting committees. Of particular relevance to the topic of this newsletter is *A Quaker Look at Living with Death and Dying*, by Phyllis Taylor, which was published by the Family Relations Committee in 1981 and revised in 1989. This helpful resource is based on two talks on expected death and unexpected death, and provides compassionate advice and information for all parties involved. There is also a section on AIDS. Copies are available for \$2.75 from Friends General Conference, (215-561-1700 or 800-966-4556). Another resource which is highly recommended by Anne and Tom Moore is *Seven Choices: Taking the Steps to New Life After Losing Someone You Love*, by Elizabeth Harper Noeld, published in 1990 by Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group.

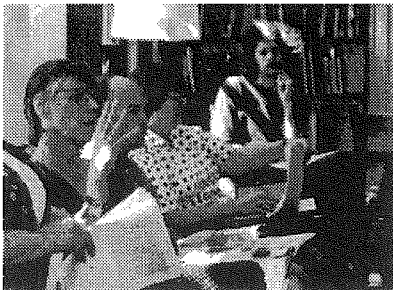
"Parenting Creatively" is an eight-week workshop series facilitated by Harriet Heath, a member of the Family Relations Committee. A series sponsored by Media and Providence Meetings (and Media Friends School) begins on January 16, and one sponsored by Westfield Meeting begins on February 4. Contact Harriet Heath at 610-649-7037 for more information.

Couple Enrichment Retreats are weekends for couples to get away together to affirm and renew their relationship. The next weekend retreat is scheduled for May 31-June 2 in Cape May, NJ. To learn more, contact Brad Sheeks and Pat McBee at 215-349-6959, or call Steve Gulick for a brochure.



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Winter Workshops

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Betty Polster February 9-11

Inquirers' Weekend: *Basic Quakerism*
Liz Kamphausen and Max Carter February 16-18

Praying with Julian and Teresa
William Kreidler March 8-10

For more information on these and other programs contact Irené Ramsay at (800) 742-3150 or (610) 566-4507
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Article by Linda Lyman (continued from p. 4)

At the time of loss, feelings are often irrational, out of control, and contradictory. People generally grieve in the same way they have lived their lives. The time of loss is not the time to expect people to change their mode of emotional expression, or to act according to someone else's expectation. For instance, it's important not to have expectations about how long it's permissible to cry. ("You've cried long enough. Now stop crying. It's not going to bring your husband back.")

Each individual's experience and needs are unique. Some people need the safety of someone to express tears with, other people will cry only in private. Some people want physical contact, a time for hugs and being held; others are uncomfortable with that much closeness. For most grieving people, loneliness is felt intensely. Some people are afraid to be alone. They want someone in the house with them, someone to be present but not demanding, until a relative or close friend arrives. Some people want time to themselves -- a time to think, to come to grips with the reality of their loss, to be with memories, to be reflective about what to do next, to scream or slam doors. Some people will be in a state of denial, perhaps even philosophical about the death. Others will express anger and rage or a sense of anxiety and fear, and some will blame others or blame themselves.

People going through the normal grieving process can experience a lack of energy, loss of appetite, inability to sleep, or increased irritability. Sometimes people in the throes of grief will experience the physical symptoms of the person who has died. It is important not to make assumptions about physical symptoms but to encourage the grieving person to see a physician.

Some people will become depressed. Others will be accepting, relieved that the death of their loved one has brought release from pain and suffering. Sometimes people who are grieving feel like they are going crazy; they may be reassured to hear that strong feelings are a normal part of the grieving process. While most people have experienced all those feelings to some extent at different periods of their lives, the intensity of feeling will be amplified during a period of grief.

Often grieving people need to tell their story in detail many times, particularly if their loss was a sudden death. Listening without judgment, using the name of the person who has died and asking gentle questions to indicate your caring helps the grieving person to stay in contact with the meeting. If the griever seems stuck in his or her story, sometimes people get tired of hearing the same story repeated. They say "You're dwelling too much on the past, you've got to live in the present; you have to get on with life". But for many people going through the grieving process, it is that repetitive telling of the story that is very healing.

Overseers can organize a number of people to make home visits to spread the repetitiveness among Friends. Other members of the meeting who have experienced similar losses may come forward to offer support. It is also helpful to suggest appropriate support groups. Overseers may even offer to attend a support group meeting with the grieving person and provide transportation, especially at first.

At the time of terminal illness and death people often find comfort in using religious language and talking about their relationship to the Divine. Friends who are comfortable articulating their own spirituality (and being silent about it) will be best able to get the sense of the person and will not assume their own language or relationship to God is the same as the grieving person's, or anyone else's.

Caring for the meeting community

Overseers need to keep their collective thumbs on the pulse of the meeting community if a beloved member has died. Many Friends may feel the loss deeply and the whole meeting may go into a state of mourning at the loss of a vital member of their faith community. In one meeting after a clerk was murdered the whole meeting gradually descended into a state of depression, with many members experiencing unspoken feelings of anger and guilt. The meeting felt spiritually depleted. It was only after the meeting's loss was named a year later and their corporate experience shared and honored that real healing for the members and for the meeting itself could begin.

Overseers or those who have the care of the meeting have a privileged opportunity in helping Friends in the meeting face death and loss. They share not only in the suffering and pain but in the healing presence of the Holy Spirit as expressed through the human spirit.

Linda Lyman, retired family therapist and clerk of Ministry & Counsel Committee in Bellingham Preparative Meeting in Washington State, has offered numerous workshops on dealing with anger, grief, and loss at Pendle Hill, Woodbrooke, FGC Gatherings, and other Quaker forums.

ter in various ways. In one situation I was asked to offer the opening remarks for a memorial service for the brother of a dear friend and meeting member. That was a challenge, but one that I was glad to be able to do. In another instance I declined that role, feeling I just couldn't do it.

Through this experience, I've learned how important it is to not get too tired. That takes a little extra effort. One note I received said, "be sure to pay attention to your own health because this makes more demands on your health than you realize." That was one of the cards that I valued most.

Tom: The expanded family of Friends has reached out to me in many ways as well. In my committee involvements in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, everybody has been so considerate and supportive. Every meeting I attended, people would come up and say something to me about Lydia's death. Months later people who had just found out would say "I hope this won't upset you but I just need to say how sorry I feel." What I found, thanks to those people, was that such late commiserations were wonderful. They helped me to discover where I was. And often I found myself shedding a tear, but I was also able to say "Thank you very much. I guess I had another round of tears to shed."

One of the things Anne and I have discovered through this whole experience is the value of living one's life in touch with other people. We've felt very much surrounded by love, and upheld. We've wanted people, particularly those acquainted with Lydia, to know that we

know this is not just our private grief. We wanted to let friends and acquaintances know that it's all right to talk about it. It turns out that many people want to talk about their own losses. Sam Snipes helped us to see how we could benefit from lending a sympathetic ear. That means we've needed to have time to listen. And if one's life is going on at a pace that allows one to hear people, then it's possible to offer this kind of mutual service.

Anne: It's been important to listen, even though it hasn't always been easy, particularly when Lydia's death seemed only to trigger a flood of memories about their loved one's death told in great detail. But even so, I wouldn't call that a negative. It's just been part of the process. It's been helpful for me to recognize that this process is really a lifetime process.

Tom: Anne and I have also discovered how different our feelings have been. For some time, even before Lydia's death, we've had the practice of setting aside time to talk with each other about our feelings. After Lydia's death we would check in with each other, saying "well how are you doing?" and we would find ourselves experiencing everything from crying to needing to know more information, to having different levels of need to get all the details. We kept rediscovering that each of us was at a different place. And we also found that we were able to support each other in our differences, by keeping in touch with them. It wasn't a matter of saying "well at last you're catching up with me." It was just helping each other to be able to talk about where each of us was, to do whatever we needed to do, to recognize that whatever we each were doing was legitimate.

Facing Death and Loss in the Meeting



Linda Lyman

Tom and Anne Moore have given us a gift. Through their awareness of the love that surrounded them when their daughter was killed, they experienced Friends as instruments of god's healing grace. By sharing the interweaving of their grief and healing, they help us examine ways Friends can respond when death touches the meeting community.

Death often surprises us. If we have done our own inner work to prepare ourselves and our meetings, we will be able to provide more effective support when someone in our meeting

suffers the loss of a loved one. Here are a few thoughts to keep in mind.

Preparation ahead of time

One important way to prepare is to arrange a practical workshop for the meeting so that Friends can think about the areas in which decisions will need to be made. The workshop could include information about relevant issues such as wills, living wills, appointment of executor, organ contribution programs, donation of the body to a medical school, and issues relating to cremation and/or burial arrangements. The workshop could also provide an opportunity for Friends to become clear about their ethical choices and how they want those choices carried out during the dying process and after death. Single members of the meeting need to make their wishes and arrangements known, as to where to contact relatives, how to care for pets, etc. Same gender couples in particular need to have signed medical power of attorney forms.

Sometimes people want to write their own death notices and plan their own Celebration of Life or Memorial Meeting for Worship. Providing opportunities for Friends to give consideration to such personal issues is another important step in preparation.

The other significant area of preparation is the spiritual. Overseers need to be sensitive to their own unresolved grief and loss. It is an emotional, psychological, and ultimately spiritual journey that everyone must undergo in one form or another or they will find it difficult to be present to someone else's grief without tapping into their own hidden pain. People who have not faced their own losses frequently cannot acknowledge another person's grief; they may avoid a grieving person because they don't know what to say or do. Although that is understandable, it means that the grieving person experiences a double loss -- the loss of their loved one and the loss of supportive friends.

Practical Ways to Help

During the first few days after the death, Overseers can provide the following:

- information about burial procedures, options for cremation, etc.
- opportunity for meeting with a small clearness committee for help with immediate decisions.

- help with communication when many people need to be told about the death, and hospitality for persons arriving from out of town.
- help with the memorial service.
- help with writing notices for newspapers, *Friends Journal*, or other publications.
- organization around meals to be delivered to the person or family experiencing the loss during the first week or two. Organization is important to avoid what one Friend experienced as an overabundance of sweet desserts and no substantive food.

Often, in the case of someone who has died after an extended illness, the grieving person has been the primary caregiver. At the time of death, the caregiver may be utterly exhausted. Overseers need to be sensitive to the need for rest before healing, or even grieving, can begin. Overseers can also mark their calendars to remember to send cards and words of encouragement at various times during the year, particularly on the anniversary of the death. Overseers can also encourage Friends to extend supper and holiday dinner invitations to the grieving person, particularly on the anniversary of the death. They can also encourage Friends to stay available to the person or family suffering the loss, to call if only to say, "You are in my thoughts and prayers. I'm here when you need me," or to stop by just for a moment, unless encouraged to stay longer.

Sometimes a Meeting for Worship for Healing is helpful, when Friends gather together to provide an opportunity for the grieving person to share the pain and loss and to be held in the Light. This is different from the Memorial Meeting for Worship to celebrate the dead person's life, because the focus is on the reality of the grief of the living and not on the person who has died.

Understanding grief and loss

Tom and Anne emphasize the importance of accepting the uniqueness of each individual's response to grief. What the grieving person needs is a listening ear and a caring presence. Overseers can be most effective by asking how they can be helpful, and by listening without making judgments. It is important not to offer advice or assume one knows what the grieving person needs.

(Continued on Insert, p. 1)