Planning Your Memorial Service

When a loved one dies, Unitarian Universalists come together to support those who are grieving, and to honor and celebrate the life of the person who has died. We gather to say goodbye, and to share our sorrow at their passing, but also to give thanks for all of the blessings the person has brought to our lives. We hold many different beliefs about the mystery of death, but are united in our belief that love is stronger than death.

At North Shore Unitarian Church, a memorial service is usually planned by the family of the deceased and the presiding minister to specially honor the memory of that individual. The service might include the following elements:

* A memorial address
* Poems and other readings
* Prayer or meditation
* A time to remember the deceased with stories and memories
* Hymn singing or other music
* A time for personal reflection

An effective memorial service is a special balance of tender loving memory and a lasting, shared celebration of a life well lived. There should be specific comforts for the grieving family and also spiritually enriching words and music to lift the hearts and minds of all those in attendance. A memorial service is not a wake or a salon concert, but a time to reflect together on the larger meanings of life and love.

**Memorial Service Guidelines**

**A. Purpose**

North Shore Unitarian Church (NSUC) offers the support and guidance of religious professionals to all who seek to remember and honor the lives of their departed loved one.

**B. Officiant**

Rev. Lucas Hergert is available for services for members and their immediate family, and he can help non-members connect with a Unitarian Universalist minister who can officiate.

**C. Music**

Memorial Services at NSUC usually include the services of a pianist. NSUC’s Pianist is customarily requested to play for members’ services and he has the right of first refusal for all memorial services held at NSUC.

The Musicians are open to suggestions for special music, but no selections are guaranteed. Final musical selections are wholly at the discretion of the NSUC musicians. The typical number of musical selections in a memorial service is three or four pieces. For legal and logistical reasons, no recorded music can be played at these services.

If additional musicians or a soloist is requested, NSUC personnel will make such arrangements in consultation with the family. These arrangements are not customary, and additional costs are associated with these requests.

**D. Food and Alcohol**

If a reception is desired, families shall make the arrangements and pay the additional costs of a caterer. The caterer must be responsible for all setup and cleanup, and must collaborate with the memorial service coordinator.

If alcohol is served, it must follow the NSUC policy on alcohol. (The policy can be supplied on request).

**E. Memorial Service Coordinator**

All memorials must have a memorial service coordinator. This person will open the building, answer questions, advise and assist with set up, and will inspect and lock up the building.

**F. Member Memorials**

For memorials of NSUC Members and their immediate families, NSUC shall provide at no cost:

* Services of the Officiant
* Three hours of facility rental
* 100 printed orders of service

Services of the Pianist, set up and clean up, memorial service coordinator, and all others are provided at the normal established rates. The Officiant will meet with the family to consider possible dates and discuss the mood and content of the service desired; the Officiant will coordinate with NSUC Music Staff to discuss and confirm dates and other service elements under consideration.

**I. Non-Member Memorials**

For others not associated with NSUC, NSUC shall provide the facility at the usual published fees. The renters shall pay the Officiant an honorarium at the established rate and pay any additional costs for musicians, orders of service, etc. After meeting with the family, the memorial service coordinator will contact the Pianist with proposed dates for the service. Once a date and general mood of the service is agreed upon (by the family, memorial service coordinator and Pianist), the Pianist will then coordinate musical details with the family.

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