Ceremonies to Celebrate Together From Afar

A Resource for Challenging Times

Compiled by InSight Institute Certified Celebrants

InSight | Certified Celebrants

Life Tribute Professionals

To our funeral professional community

These are difficult days. Each of you are called upon to serve families in new and challenging ways. Some of you are completely isolated from those very families who need our presence. Others are trying to navigate having services that are safe and sacred. Truly this is unknown territory for each of us.

But, truly, we were born for this moment. Whether you are a licensed funeral director, a Celebrant, clergy, officiant, chaplain or one of those myriads of other roles who serve families, we have always been prepared to stand in the gap for people on their worst days. Whether that means a sweet little family who lost their baby, a suicide, an overdose, a long life that faded into a haze, the public tragedy of a shooting, bomb or attack or even a pandemic, we've always been those who face the storm and walked along side, providing guidance and safety. Now we are faced with a world-wide experience that no one could prepare for. Again, we are there, to care for the dead and speak for the bereaved. You are the heroes every day, and especially today.

The InSight Certified Celebrant family understand that these extreme times calls for new ways to offer service, words of comfort and ceremonies that heal. They have rallied together to offer their creativity and their words that can be utilized in the funeral experiences that we can provide.

We put together quotations, poems, openings and closings and ceremonies that acknowledge the situation and the grief attached to the isolation. These are offered with the expectation that the full story of the deceased would be told as well.

We offer them to you in the hopes that they provide some support and resources as you figure out how to proceed. You can take parts that fit a situation or use the entire piece.

We also encourage you to seek out Celebrants in your community. Even if you have never thought about utilizing the services of a Funeral Celebrant, we are uniquely prepared and trained to have family meetings and to craft a special and one-of-a-kind service for the families you serve. They are your best resource and partner.

If you have questions or need additional information or support, please do not hesitate to reach out.

We're all in this together. Every life deserves to be honored, no matter the situation.

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Letter or Statement for Social Media

A letter or statement that can be posted on your social media or sent to families (feel free to edit to fit your situation)

Death happens regardless of our time and space and situation. If you are faced with the unthinkable loss of losing a loved one during this unique and scary time, please know that our funeral professionals are there for you. We will work with you to make the right decisions for your family.

You can bury or cremate now and have a service later when people can be together again.

Or you can have a virtual service and invite everyone to join in via webcast or a Zoom platform. Just ask what availability your funeral professionals have for those kind of broadcasting options.

Celebrants all over the world are ready to have a family meeting by phone or Facetime and gather the stories and write a service that honors your loved one. They can perform it now via webcasting or hold it for you when you are ready to have a service.

Grief does not wait and demands that we embrace it. We all are grieving our losses right now--loss of movement and freedom, loss of income, loss of friends and family, loss of security, loss of health, loss of trust. A death just magnifies those feelings and sense of isolation. Allow the people who are trained for this work to help you walk this path and give you words of solace and comfort and ways to put the stories in a place that will help you.

Every life deserves to be celebrated. Even when we are together from afar.

Suggestions for Conducting Services:

The first thing to consider is how the services will be presented.

Some firms already offer webcasting and are comfortable and positioned for this situation. Others will be figuring out very rapidly how to procure the equipment and software and skills.

There are professional companies that offer streaming services on a per service or monthly fee. You have probably already been contacted by some of these companies in the past few days.

There are public platforms such as Zoom, Facebook Live, Go to Meeting, WebX, etc. Consult with others who have used any of these platforms or services for advice or tips on what works or pitfalls to avoid.

1. Live Stream with family present with no participants visible on the screen.

Suggestions:

- Give the family a moment to wave and express their thanks to the people who are joining them.
- Ask the participants to type in their wishes or condolences in the chat function and take a few minutes to read some of them during the service.
- Have a video tribute or pictures of the deceased visible on the screen next to the officiant.
- Be sure that flowers or mementos or flowers or service folders are shown for everyone to see.
- Have a favorite or familiar song played and put the words on the screen so everyone can sing along.
- Put the words to readings or scripture or prayers on the screen so viewers can read along.

2. Live Stream with or without family present and participants are visible on the screen

Suggestions:

- Ask the participants to write a note that can be held up to the camera for the family to see.
- Have a ceremony (a few are included in this resource book) that everyone can do together.
- Have a video tribute or pictures of the deceased visible on the screen next to the officiant.
- Be sure that flowers or mementos or service folders are shown for everyone to see.
- Have a favorite or familiar song played and put the words on the screen so everyone can sing along.
- Put the words to readings or scripture or prayers on the screen so viewers can read/recite along.

3. Taping for later broadcast

- This provides a little more opportunity for editing and smother transitions to video tribute, music, flowers, service folders, etc.
- Loses the opportunity for real time participation and family involvement.

4. Outside Services

- Have a “drive-in” funeral service with everyone staying in their cars. If you have not yet invested in portable microphone/speakers set up, now would be a good time.
- Borrow a drive in theater in your community and broadcast the service on the screen
- Drive past the home of the family with the coach.
- Encourage people to drive by the home of the family at a set time, so they can acknowledge their “presence” and wishes.
- Gravesides with family standing by their cars. Again, a strong outdoor microphone/speaker system is very important.

Quotes that Can Be Incorporated in Services

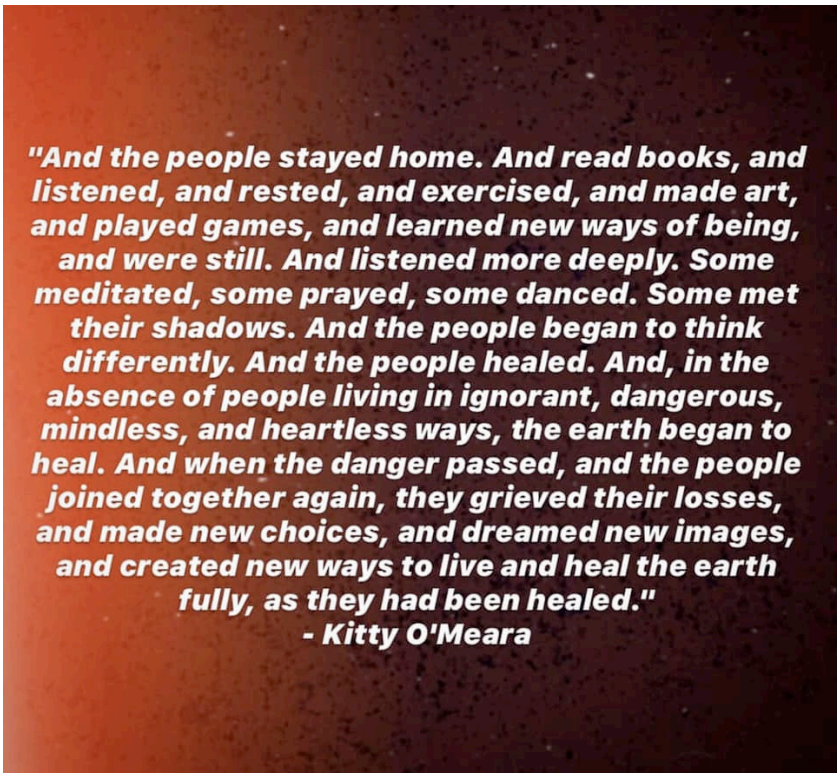
John O'Donohue 2 hrs ·

This is the time to be slow,
Lie low to the wall
Until the bitter weather passes.

Try, as best you can, not to let
The wire brush of doubt
Scrape from your heart
All sense of yourself
And your hesitant light.

If you remain generous,
Time will come good;
And you will find your feet
Again on fresh pastures of promise,
Where the air will be kind
And blushed with beginning.

JOHN O'DONOHUE


"And the people stayed home. And read books, and listened, and rested, and exercised, and made art, and played games, and learned new ways of being, and were still. And listened more deeply. Some meditated, some prayed, some danced. Some met their shadows. And the people began to think differently. And the people healed. And, in the absence of people living in ignorant, dangerous, mindless, and heartless ways, the earth began to heal. And when the danger passed, and the people joined together again, they grieved their losses, and made new choices, and dreamed new images, and created new ways to live and heal the earth fully, as they had been healed."
- Kitty O'Meara

When this is over,
may we never again
take for granted
A handshake with a stranger
Full shelves at the store
Conversations with neighbors
A crowded theatre
Friday night out
The taste of communion
A routine checkup
The school rush each morning
Coffee with a friend
The stadium roaring
Each deep breath
A boring Tuesday
Life itself.
When this ends,
may we find
that we have become
more like the people
we wanted to be
we were called to be
we hoped to be
and may we stay
that way—better
for each other
because of the worst.
LAURA KELLY FANUCCI

Let Us Agree (Jan Richardson)

Let us agree for now
that we will not say the breaking makes us stronger
or that it is better to have this pain
than to have done without this love.

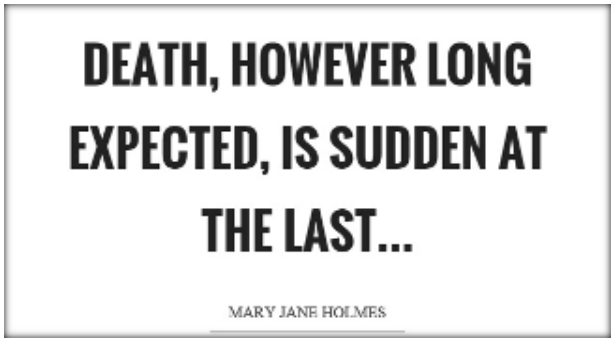
Let us promise
we will not tell ourselves time will heal the wound,
when every day our waking opens it anew.

Perhaps for now
it can be enough to simply marvel at the mystery
of how a heart so broken can go on beating,
as if it were made for precisely this—

as if it knows the only cure for love is more of it,

as if it sees the heart's sole remedy

for breaking is to love still,
as if it trusts that its own persistent pulse
is the rhythm of a blessing we cannot begin to fathom
That will save us nonetheless.



PEACE
By Sara Brown

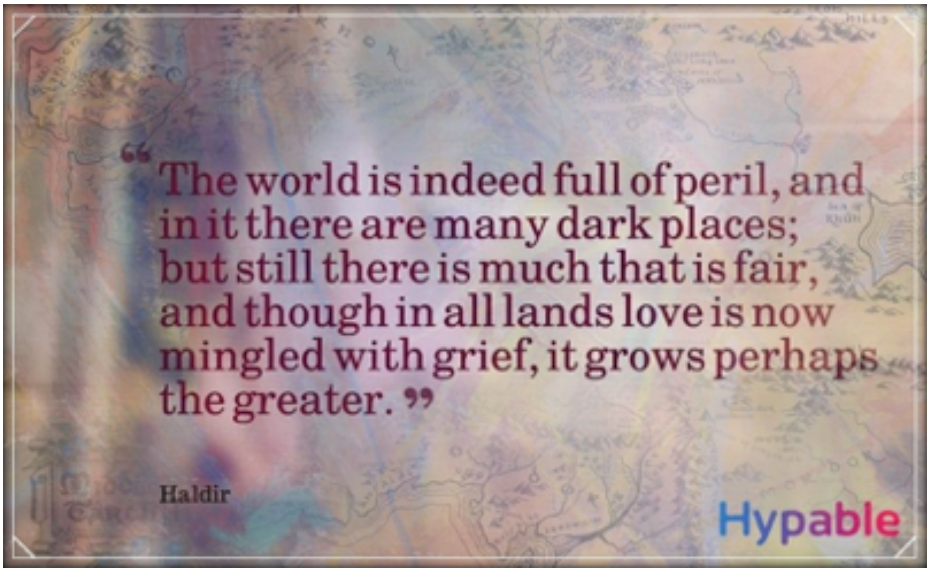
Peace to the grieving body
When the mind cannot will it to move
When it struggles to slow the breath
When it aches for physical touch
Peace to the shattered heart
When the loss feels too heavy to bear
When it waffles between numbing
And searching for something that heals

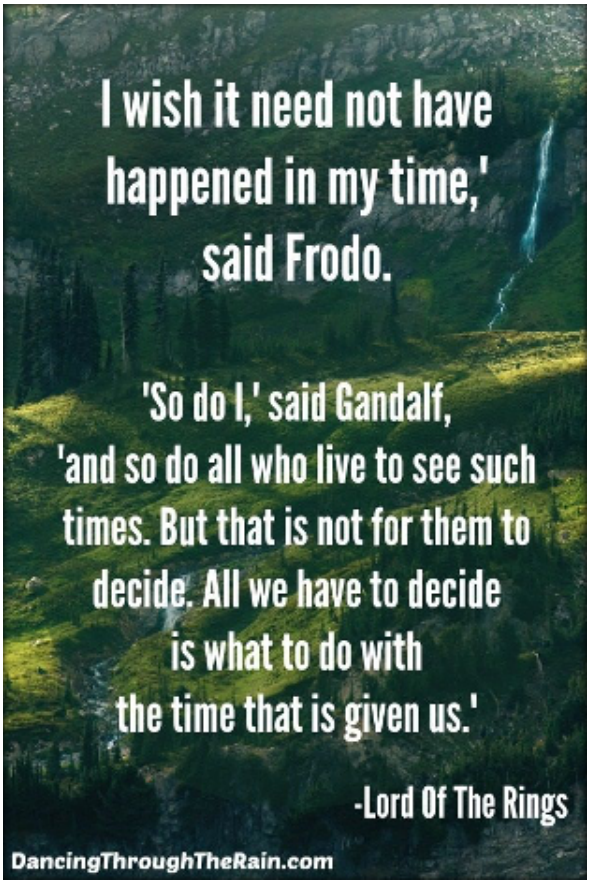
Peace to the anxious mind
When it reels with uncertainty about the future
When it's paralyzed with regret from the past
When it fears what it cannot control
Peace to the broken spirit
When the sun shines but inside feels muted
Peace in the middle of the dark
and lonely nights of the soul

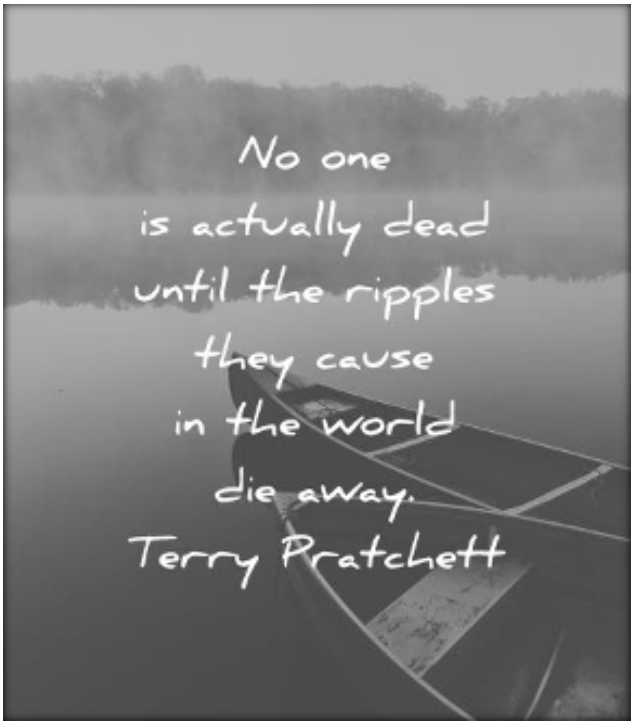
In the hollow and deafening silence
While wrestling with the Mystery,
Grace to surrender to what simply is
To be still enough to listen

To your grieving body
your shattered heart
your anxious mind
your broken spirit

May they all be blanketed with
Peace




I wish it need not have happened in my time,' said Frodo.
'So do I,' said Gandalf, 'and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us.'
-Lord Of The Rings
DancingThroughTheRain.com

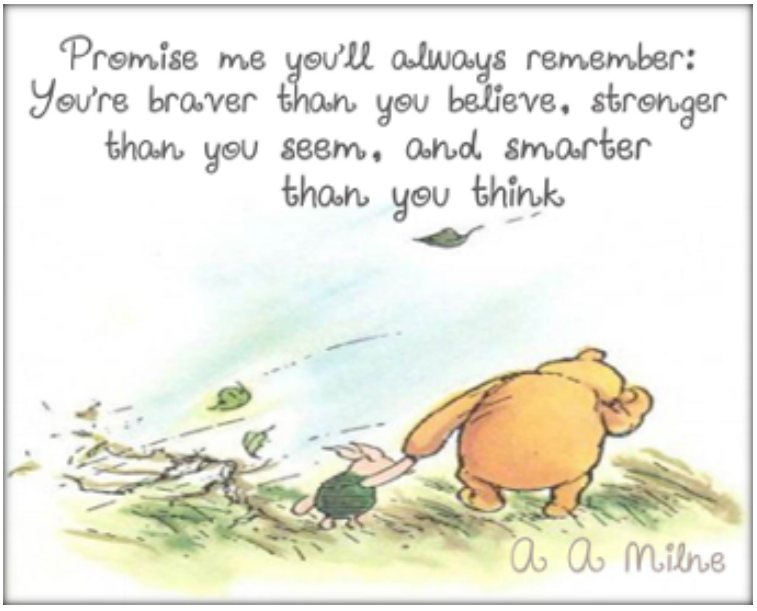

No one is actually dead until the ripples they cause in the world die away.
Terry Pratchett

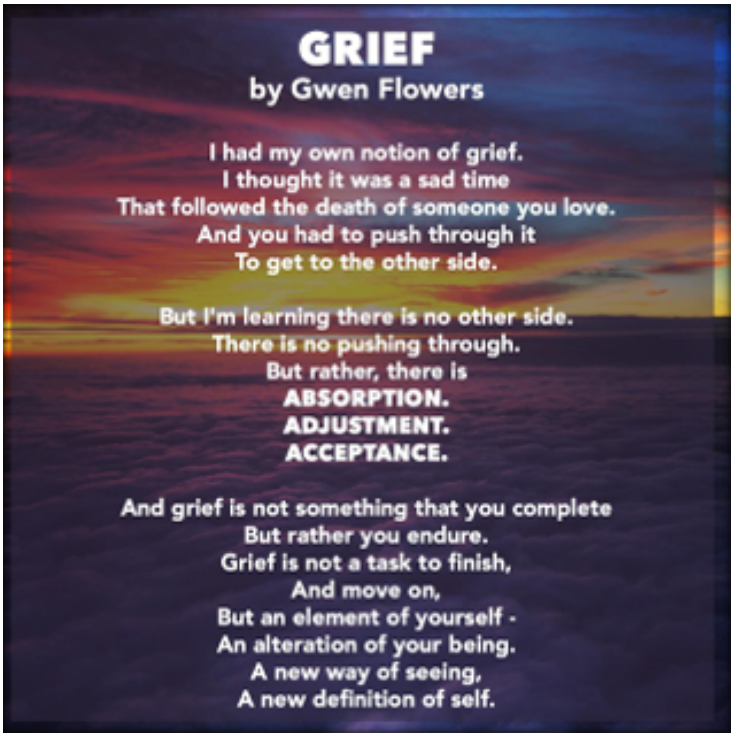
"IT'S SO CURIOUS: ONE CAN RESIST TEARS AND 'BEHAVE' VERY WELL IN THE HARDEST HOURS OF GRIEF. BUT THEN SOMEONE MAKES YOU A FRIENDLY SIGN BEHIND A WINDOW, OR ONE NOTICES THAT A FLOWER THAT WAS IN BUD ONLY YESTERDAY HAS SUDDENLY BLOSSOMED, OR A LETTER SLIPS FROM A DRAWER...AND EVERYTHING COLLAPSES."
~COLETTE
WWW.WHATSYOURGRIEF.COM

In the blink of an eye, everything can change. So forgive often and love with all your heart. You may never know when you may not have that chance again.
Lessons Learned In Life

"Everyone must leave something behind when he dies, my grandfather said. A child or a book or a painting or a house or a wall built or a pair of shoes made. Or a garden planted. Something your hand touched some way so your soul has somewhere to go when you die, and when people look at that tree or that flower you planted, you're there."

~Ray Bradbury
Farenheit 451




GRIEF
by Gwen Flowers
I had my own notion of grief.
I thought it was a sad time
That followed the death of someone you love.
And you had to push through it
To get to the other side.
But I'm learning there is no other side.
There is no pushing through.
But rather, there is
ABSORPTION.
ADJUSTMENT.
ACCEPTANCE.
And grief is not something that you complete
But rather you endure.
Grief is not a task to finish,
And move on,
But an element of yourself -
An alteration of your being.
A new way of seeing,
A new definition of self.

1 Words for Opening

The singular need of the human race is to be together.

Tribes, families, teams, communities, states, countries, continents. Gathering for protection, for the common good, for support, for entertainment, for shared vision and goals, for comfort. Gathering becomes even more important at those moments in life when we stop to acknowledge a milestone. Birthdays, holidays, reunions, graduations. It is an innate drive to be with others. That the event is not properly recognized until the significant people in our experience share it with us.

This is especially true at the time of death. Our first inclination is to go, to commune, to hug, to share stories, to break bread, to remember. . .together.

During this unique and unsettled time in the history of the world, we are prevented from following our natural instincts. How can we honor a life and mourn a death without others surrounding us?

So, we are called upon to be together from afar. To trust the power and mystery of spirit that will join our hearts and minds together. To call upon the best feelings inside each of us to make an extra effort, to remember long after this day is gone. Because we can create community even when we are isolated.

We invite you to relax and reflect. To listen to the stories and music. To add your own memories in your heart as you hear the words. To send healing thoughts of solidarity, of shared grief, of promises of tomorrow.

And we ask that you pledge to walk alongside, even from a distance, after today. When the lights are turned off, when the screen is dark, when the pictures have faded and you continue your days of sheltering and protection, your work begins.

The beauty of this particular time in our existence is the power of communication. Stay in touch. Send an email, make a call, Facetime and laugh together, text a memory. Or, as we sink into the demands of a less complex and busy schedule for this moment in time, perhaps it's an opportunity to revive the age-old practice of writing a letter, a card, a picture, a note. Your spirit flows through the act of writing and provides something concrete and visible that this family can hold in their hands. Something that will stay with them in the dark days of grief to come.

So we ask that you join your hearts and thoughts together as we begin to remember _____.

2 Words for Opening

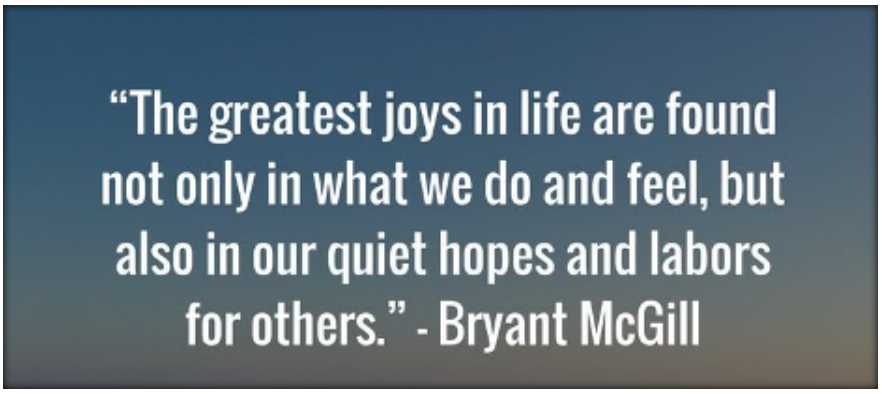
We gather today to honor the life and mourn the death of _____. We are here in spirit for the family: _____ *(names of family)*. We pledge to be here for you, offering ears for stories, and promising shoulders for tears when we have the chance to be together again.

Grief does not wait and demands that we embrace it. We all are grieving our losses right now—loss of movement, loss of income, loss of friends and family, loss of security, loss of health, loss of trust. A death just magnifies those feelings and sense of isolation. Allow the people who are trained for this work to help you walk this path and give you words of solace and comfort and ways to put the stories in a place that will help you.

We gather today, because it is an important and vital part of our experience to share this sacred moment, to be still and listen to each other's hearts, to dedicate ourselves to being our best selves because _____ was in this world.

Every life deserves to be celebrated. Even when we are together from afar. So, let us begin.

3 Words for Opening or Closing



These are strange and unsettled times. When safety and security feel threatened to our very bones. When usual has no meaning. When we ache for contact and find ourselves at a distance.

A death in the family, a loss in the community, only magnifies that feeling of being undone. Of the world being turned upside down. Of time stopping and normal being a distant memory.

So we gather in the only way we can to offer the only thing we can—our hearts, our support, our promise to never leave you alone.

But the other thing that this strange and scary time has shown us is the innate goodness of people. Those moments of kindness, those sacred acts of love and sacrifice.

Those who have delivered groceries and essentials to those who cannot leave their homes.

Those who sat down at their sewing machines to create life-saving masks for our health care workers.

Those who volunteered at food banks and community centers.

Those who sheltered in place to save others.

Those who gave of their plenty to help those who worry about having enough.

Those who have reached out to check on each other in so many unheralded acts of concern.

Those who made sure to thank the grocery worker, the restaurant delivery person, the mail and carrier professionals who kept you in touch with your world.

Those who paid for services not received, understanding that the person who cuts your hair, does your nails or cleans your house depend upon customers for their very survival.

Those who made the effort today to be with you, to honor your loss, to mourn as a community what this death means to everyone.

We pray for each other and pledge to never forget that the only way we survive is together. Even from afar.

We celebrate that this dark time in our experience has shone a light on the best in all of us.

We offer to you what we can—our hearts, our support and our promise to never leave you alone. Expect to hear from each person in the coming days, weeks and months. Welcome the texts, the calls, the emails, the cards. Feel the warmth being sent, the hugs that will be shared.

We acknowledge that grief is as unique as a fingerprint and each of you will experience this loss in your own way and in your own time. So be kind and offer grace to yourself as you enter this path of the unknown amidst the unknown. We ask for blessings on each of you.

4 Blessing for Opening or Closing

May we all understand that the journey of grief is long, and each person finds what helps them along the way to get them through the next hour the next day, the next week.

May we recognize that these special times require special efforts to be present in new ways. That hugs from a distance are powerful, that there is always a time to say I love you, that support and comfort comes in many forms, that we each walk this path of grief to the place of gratitude. May we never let anyone grieve in isolation.

May you understand that tears are memories in motion and there is no better way to express your grief than through those sacred moments of crying.

May you find your own special way to honor _____'s life, hear _____'s voice and claim _____'s spirit in your heart while being grateful each day for the life, love and example of _____.

May God give you peace and comfort in your memories and in the lessons learned from this good and faithful servant. Amen

5 Prayer for Opening or Closing

Dear God of Broken Hearts,

Today there is a gathering of family and friends who are reeling in shock, in despair and in disbelief that they are here. They wish to hold on to each other, but our times have determined that this cannot be possible at this moment. They search for answers, for solace and for a promise of peace. Help each of them as they find ways to live in a world that no longer contains _____, who loved to the very best of _____ ability, who overcame so many challenges and shared his/her spirit with all who came into his/her sphere.

We ask for wisdom in sorrow and lessons in being present for each other in unique and special ways as every heart navigates their way on the grief path. For this we give thanks. Amen.

Candle Ceremony

Candles are important in our existence. We light them for special events, for birthdays, for holidays, for reverent moments of worship, for quiet times at home. There is something powerful and peaceful about the light that reflects back into our souls.

Today, to bring us all together, we are going to share the light. To create a sacred space of reflection and memories, to send thoughts across the miles that can be felt by everyone here.

We're going to pause for a few moments and let you find a light: A candle, a flashlight, a lighter—whatever you have in your home that can break the darkness. We'll play some music to give you a minute to find something.

MUSIC

Now we light our candles together *(officiant lights candle).* We trust in the power of spirit and connectedness that brings us together. We promise to hold our lights from this day forward, to spread that warmth to each person here as we remember _____. Let the world know that being alone does not keep us from being together.

We light our candles in thankfulness and memory of _____ and pledge to support each other as we find our way to a new normal without this light in each of your lives.

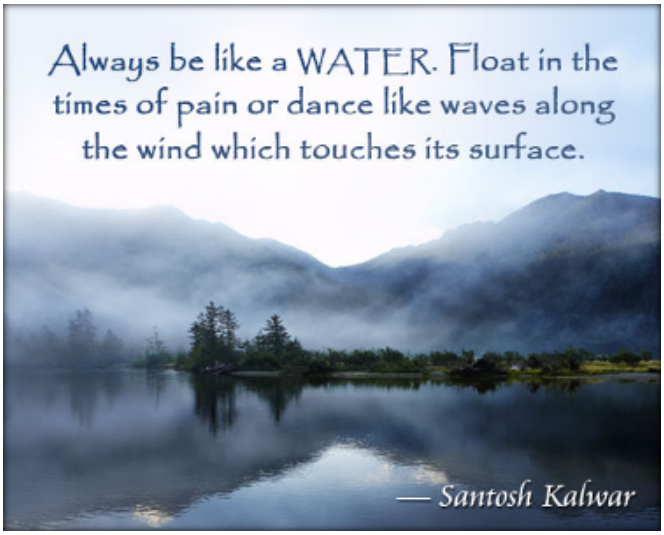
The Ties that Bind Ceremony

The loss of a loved one in typical times is hard enough, during these times of uncertainty and isolation it is beyond devastating. The normal comfort of coming together to seek solace and share our collective grief is not an option. We search for something, anything, with which we can center ourselves so we can move forward in our mourning of this loss.

You have been asked to find some type of "tie." It can be a piece of yarn or thread, a ribbon, even a shoelace. Please take it and find something nearby to place it around. It can be a lamp, a candlestick, a stair railing, or anything similar. Now, wrap the tie around the object and secure with some type of knot or bow. As you do this, think of something positive that bound you to _____: Love provided, wisdom shared, or comfort given. Whether through words or actions, the impact _____had on your life is still present, even though they are no longer here. Use this "tie" as a symbolic reminder of that impact, and reflect upon it when you need some grounding amidst the chaotic swirl of the here and now. And remember the others who grieve with you. Even though you are not physically together, this symbol you each have in your homes binds you in solidarity and spirit. Reach out to them and share your memories of _____ and let the senses of sight and sound fill the gap in your hearts that touch would usually provide.

We do not know what the future holds, but we know what _____ meant to us and our lives. In times of uncertainty, let the love _____ represented be the tie that binds us together despite our distance.

Water Ceremony



It has been said that water has memory. Water refreshes, cleanses, nourishes and re-imagines. Water reminds each of us that we are not alone in this world. That we depend upon each other just as we depend upon the air and the water that sustains us. Water has memory and can be a powerful conduit of our own memories.

We are going to give you a moment to get some water. It can be in a bottle, a glass, a bowl. Whatever is available to you. We'll play some music for a few minutes.

MUSIC

Now we invite you to whisper your memories of _____ into the water: A funny story, a time of struggle and strength, that moment when you knew that _____ was a special person in your world. Or, if you are here to support one of the family members, speak your encouragement, your wishes for a safe journey, your promise to be present now and when it is again safe to be physically in community.

You can save that water in a bottle to share with the family at a later time. Or take it outside and sprinkle it in the garden or on a tree, trusting the earth to hold that memory for you. Water has memory. Let it help us hold on to our memories.

Words Ceremony

The entire existence of the human race depends upon words. Words encourage, destroy, bless, curse, create, communicate, deceive, guide, inform, comfort, love, anger, and bind us all together.

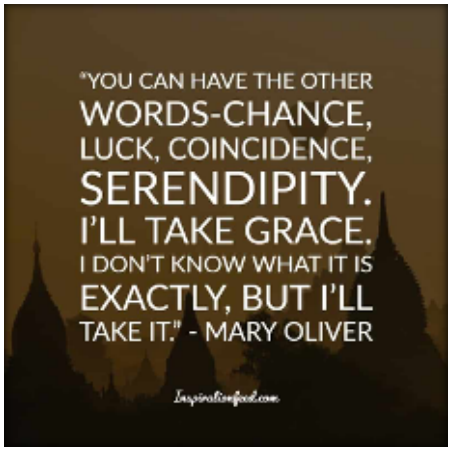
Words can reach across time and barriers, traditions or nations. Words can inspire or discourage. Words can heal.

But sometimes, we don't have words to express the deep experiences that flow from our hearts and souls. We often say that when words fail, ceremony speaks.

So, we invite you to participate in this ceremony to provide you a safe space for your words.

As you think about _____ or about _____'s family, find something to write on. A piece of paper, a rock, a card, a ribbon, a magazine, a newspaper, a brick—anything that can accept your words. Write down one word that captures your thoughts, your memories, your grief, your hopes. Or just write _____'s name. The act of attaching your words will help cement this life's work and life's legacy into your own heart.

1 Closing Words



Grace is what _____ gave of freely to each of you in his/her loving path. Grace is how you walked each day with _____ through the sunshine and rain, the mountains and the valleys. Grace is what you offer to each other as you grieve together and individually trying to articulate what this life has meant and will mean to you.

Grace is understanding that the way we heal our world in this moment is to be distant and determined. Grace is embracing the opportunity to be present in new and different ways. Grace is promising to journey from afar until the time we can once again journey together.

Grace is what is called for as we help the family navigate truly understanding that this special life is gone. Grace is what you bestow on others who come into your world as a way to celebrate and honor _____ 's influence in your life. Grace, at the end of the day, is the one thing that can give all of us hope.

So, as you take a deep breath and try to figure out how to put one foot in front of the other, remember the smile, the compassion, the singular personality of _____ and how he/she would face the world with defiance and undaunted bravery. This, too, is the gift of grace that he/she leaves you.

2 Closing Words

So now how will you remember _____? Have his/her favorite candy/dessert/beverage. Make a special time to sit with your family and tell _____ stories. Go take a walk and breathe in the glorious air and breathe out your stress and concern and sadness. Watch the birds as they bring joy and song into this sad world. Write a card or a note. Find something that _____ gave to you or something that reminds you of _____ and place it in a special place so you will think of _____ each day.

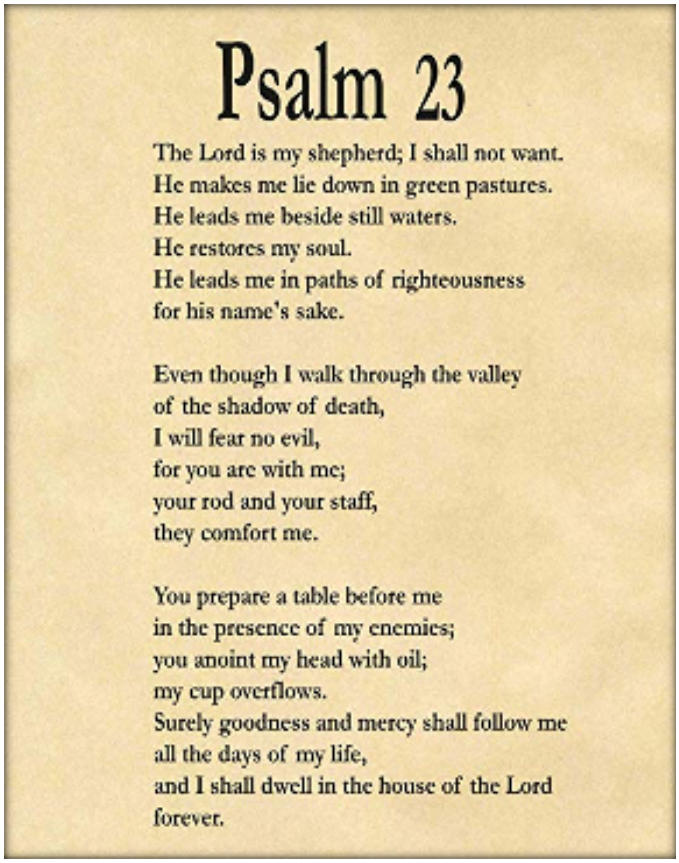
Be grateful. Grateful for the people around you.
Grateful for those brave people who stood in the storm to serve others during our time of crisis.
Grateful for a time of quiet and reflection, a time to reset and reconsider what is important in life.
Grateful for the promise of tomorrow and the promise of one of these days.
Grateful for the life of _____ and the impact h/she made upon this world.
Grateful for memories and stories.
Grateful for missing human touch and welcoming gatherings.
Grateful for family, for safety, for friends, for the future, for love.

Scripture Reading: 23rd Psalm

The 23rd Psalm is often used at moments such as this. The ancient words can provide assurance and solace in difficult times. But, we often think of the creator of this poetry as King David, who sat on the throne and was in charge of all he surveyed. However, history informs us that at this point in his experience, David was on the run, afraid for his life, hiding in a cave, alone. He was in a place he'd never been before.

Today, as we try to make sense of saying goodbye without the comfort of gathering and touch, you might be afraid, hiding in isolation, alone, in a place you've never been before.

So, let us listen to this words that have been read so many times with new ears, with an open heart, with a searching spirit as you seek support in times of the unknown. May it bless your hurting heart and seep into your soul.



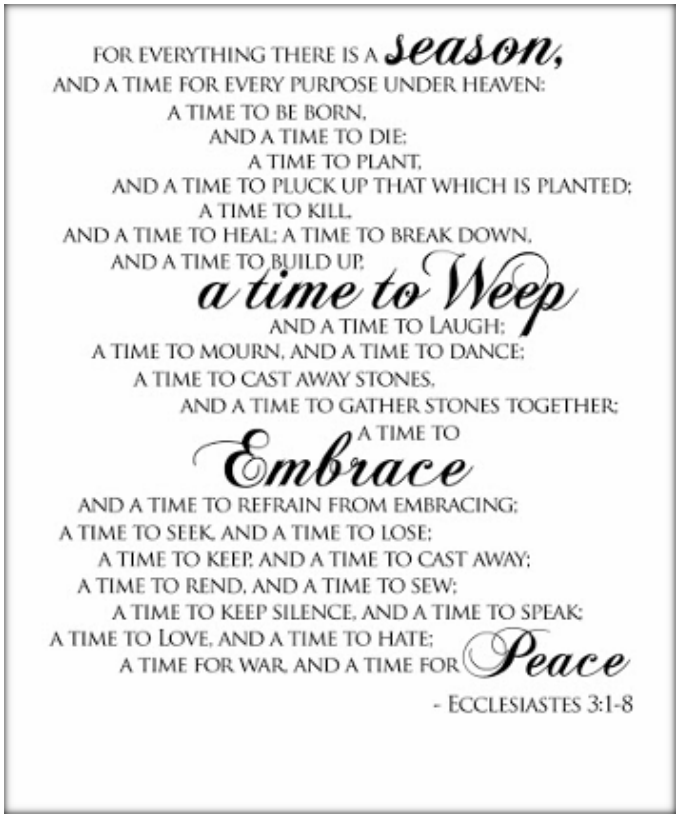
Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters.
He restores my soul.
He leads me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley
of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
forever.

Scripture Reading: Ecclesiastes 3



As the scripture tells us, to everything there is a season. Today we find ourselves in a season of distance and difficulty, a season of fear and sadness. While the entire world grieves the undoing of all we hold dear, you are grieving the loss of _____ and the season of feeling alone in your journey. Truly this is the time to refrain from embracing.

But the ancient words also promise us that there is a season of embracing, of love and of peace. So, we hold fast to that hope that soon this season will, too, pass and we once again will find ourselves in a season of gathering and sharing.

And, when that season comes, may we also find that our season is fulfilled in gratitude and grace.

That we don't once again become consumed by the trials and trivia of everyday life.

That we don't take our friends and loved ones for granted.

That we look at the world with new eyes of understanding that life can change in an instant and that we live with intention and purpose.

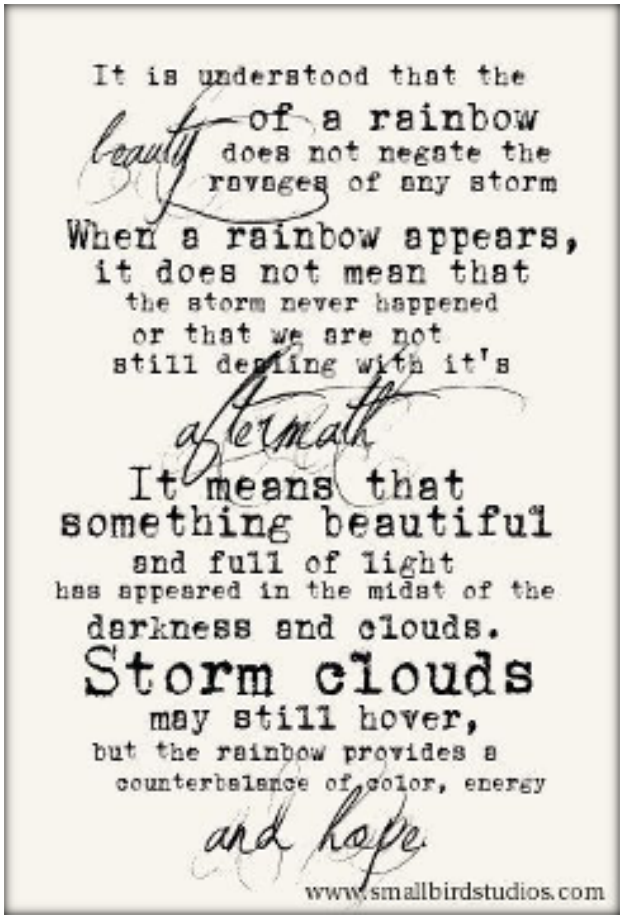
That we remember this moment in time when we stood together from afar to honor this life and mourn this death.

To gather up all those memories and carve a special place in your heart to hold them fast.

To look forward to the day when you can sit around and say "do you remember when" and share laughter and tears as you embrace the life of _____ and make it a daily part of your perspective and presence.

This is a time to plant those moments for a harvest in future days.

Graveside for A Baby



And now we come to say our goodbyes to _____. Death has forced us to let go of the baby you ached to hold, to carry, to teach, to love. As you whisper your words of love, you send your thoughts, your hopes, your dreams and your wishes for a healthy, happy little _____who would have grown up to have an impact on his/her world. You are now the ambassadors of _____'s legacy. When you leave this place, you do so with a promise to remember and to represent all that is good in the world because of the love that created this little life and the grace that can be shared with others.

Say a prayer, whisper a blessing, think of a person who needs to feel unconditional love, and dedicate yourself to making the world better in _____'s name and in his/her memory. You may come back often to tell him/her a story, to place a flower, to remember a special day or days that never could be. This will always be holy ground, the place where his/her name and his/her story will be remembered.

Closing Prayer

For the gathering of family and friends and the warm embrace of support, even from a distance, we are grateful.
For the brief days of life that will leave memories for a lifetime, we are grateful.
For loving choices and brighter tomorrows, we are grateful.
For a beautiful baby who blessed everyone in _____'s short time on this earth, we are grateful.
For the safety of understanding ears and strong shoulders, we are grateful.
In all things, in all ways, we are grateful. Amen

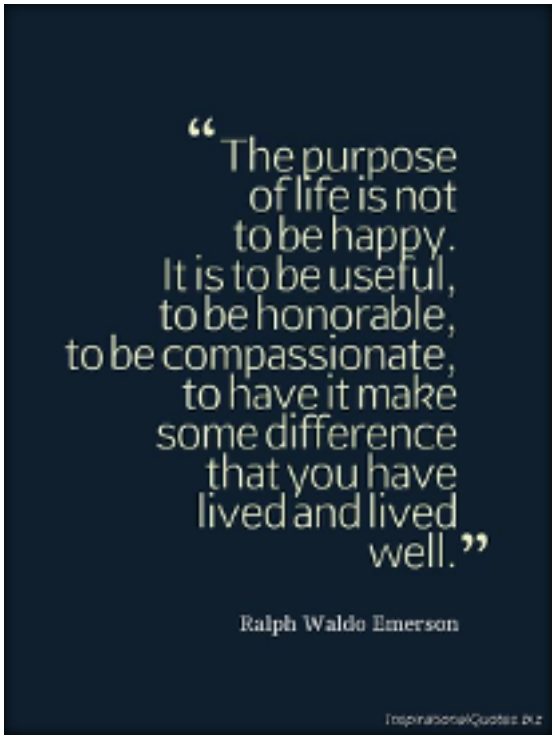
Graveside: Bubble Ceremony

(instead of having a balloon release. Family members could stay in their cars and watch the bubbles. You could print these words for them to read along in case they can't hear the microphone outside. It is suggested that you purchase an industrial size bubble machine)

Bubbles are magical. They make us smile. They make us giggle. They remind us of simple joys and simple times.
Bubbles are brief. They are here for just a moment, sparkling, bouncing, shimmering. Then, having completed their task, they are gone. Left behind is the memory of the joy and the experience.
So, as we watch these bubbles dancing in the air, let us be thankful for _____'s time on earth. It was not long enough for anyone here, but _____ completed his/her task, brought joy, light and energy into the world. Now his/her task is completed. While it makes us sad to not have him/her in your world, you can remember this sparkling life that bounced through your lives and left memories that will stay with you forever.

Graveside

(if you are allowed to have gravesides in your community)



And so, we come together to honor the life that _____ lived. He/She was honorable, compassionate, vigilant and undaunted. He/She lived well in the world that he/she made.

We come to lay him/her to rest next to his/her family, to bid him/her a fond farewell, to acknowledge the pain of loss and the days of grief that lay ahead for his/her family and friends, and to honor this ground as holy ground.

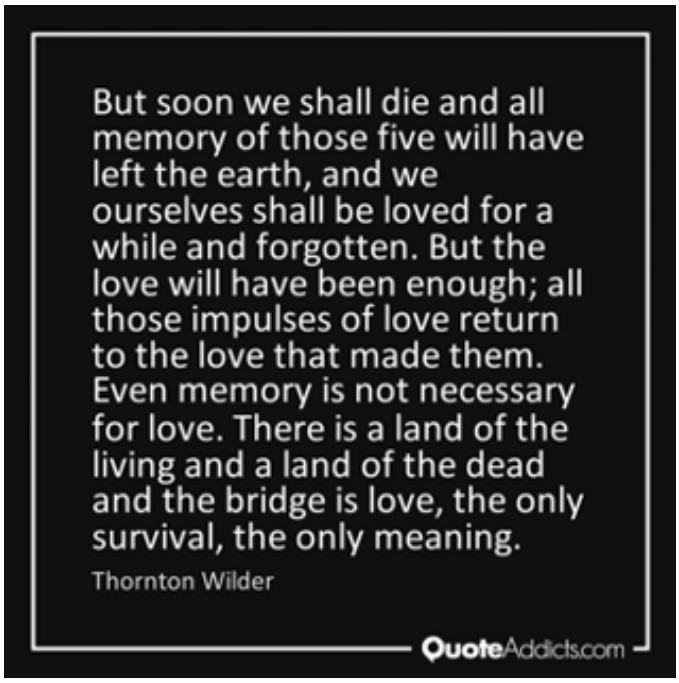
From this time on, this land will be sacred to you. For it is here that your loved one, _____ returns to the earth from which we all came. It is here that generations to come will find a connection to their roots. They will come here and feel the sense of belonging to a greater force called family.

It is here that many will come to feel the presence and the love shared in life. Some will come often. Other may come only on rare occasions; all who come will be blessed. We come to make a sacred space of remembering. To make it a place of peace where you can come to have a chat, to share a moment, to shed a tear, or place a flower. All in the memory of _____ who touched each of your lives.

It is here that we show honor to the memories of a life that touched us and remains alive in our hearts, for no one is dead until they are forgotten.

May we therefore now hallow this ground and pledge to remember and honor _____ for as long as you live. We say goodbye to _____ and wish him/her a peaceful journey as he/she leaves us. As we lay him/her to rest, we remember the lives in love that have gone before him/her.

Thornton Wilder wrote in The Bridge of San Luis Ray



You will be sustained and comforted by that love and the thin place between life and death where those memories can flow and warm your hearts. Where memories are just a breath away.

Final Blessing

For the life of _____ , we are grateful. For the example of unconditional love and unquenchable spirit*, we are grateful.

For the strength of family and friends, we are grateful.

For a shining life of optimism and intentionality, we are grateful. For a strong man/woman who always believed in tomorrow and took care of everyone around him/her, we are grateful.

Be with this family as they find places to put all these memories and lessons that will comfort them in the days and weeks and months to come. Wrap them in love, give them journeyers who will walk with them, remind them daily of the amazing gift of a life that they were given. For all of these, we are grateful. Go in peace and love each other in _____ 's name. Amen

**(substitute qualities that fit the person you are remembering throughout the blessing)*