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## 7 DEATH CEREMONIES

*I heartily agree with funeral directors that ceremonies at a time of death are important in meeting the social and emotional needs of survivors. This chapter presents the viewpoint, however, that effective and appropriate ceremonies are possible with very little expense. And that conversely, elaborate and expensive ceremonies may distract attention from the meaning and value of the life of the one who has died.*

*The chapter includes detailed instruction on many aspects of death ceremonies, particularly encouraging participation of family and friends in whatever type of service is chosen. Appendix 7, "Sample Death Ceremonies," includes sample ceremonies and readings which may be used.*

*Much of the work of preparing this chapter was done by Ann Bary, of the Bowling Green Memorial Society, who studied the subject over a period of years and corresponded with hundreds of clergy and lay people. Valuable ideas were derived also from Dr. LeRoy Bowman's *The American Funeral*, which remains an authoritative source after thirty-eight years, and from my own experience.*

Humankind, from earliest times, has practiced death ceremonies and procedures in great variety. The reason for these ceremonies is not hard to understand. Such procedures are important to the healing process. No human being lives in a social vacuum; our speech, habits, values — the very meaning of life — derive from our association with one another. Hence the death of one individual is traumatic for the survivors. Recognizing that death ceremonies and related customs are important in meeting the social and emotional needs of survivors, we should plan these ceremonies carefully.

In recent years there has been a worldwide move towards deritualized funerals (and other ceremonies, too). Our purpose in this section of the *Manual* is not to weaken or eliminate ritual but to help create more meaningful rituals.

*A State Funeral.* On the death of a prominent person with whom many people had a meaningful emotional relationship, there is need for a ceremonial in which large numbers of people can take part.

An outstanding case in which these needs were sensitively met was the funeral of President John F. Kennedy. The casket was not opened for public viewing. There were no truckloads of flowers in the funeral procession. Since the entire nation felt a close connection with President Kennedy, an impressive ceremony, widely televised, in which the whole nation could participate, was in good taste and filled an important need.

### *Three Types of Death Ceremonies*

A *funeral service* is, by definition, a service held in the presence of the body, with either an open or closed casket. A *memorial service* is by definition a service held after the body has been removed. It can be either a substitute for a funeral service or in addition to it. A *commitment*, or *committal service* is a brief, optional service held at the graveside or in the chapel of a crematory. It is usually in addition to a funeral or memorial service and is the occasion at which the immediate family and possibly a few close friends bid good-bye to the body.

Ministers and funeral directors are trained in conducting funeral and committal services, but not all have had experience with memorial services. Most of this chapter, therefore, is devoted to memorial services.

### *Funeral and Committal Services*

First, however, I want to offer a few comments on funeral and committal services. These have greater possibilities for variety and for survivor participation than are usually realized. They may be programmed closely or may provide for spontaneous participation.

Many years ago a young priest in Hays, Kansas, read the *Manual* and liked the idea of participation by funeral attenders. He designed a model funeral service which was performed at a national meeting of the Catholic Art Association in which I took part. The service proved to be a skillful blending of Catholic ritual with Quaker sharing of testimony. I recall also an excellent Quaker funeral with a closed casket, at which the funeral director presided and the attenders, including the husband of the woman who had died, did the speaking as they felt moved.

At a funeral, the choice of pallbearers should favor members of the family who may wish to take part. Instead of civic leaders and business associates, the family should have the first chance — including women and teenagers. I have known women who felt deeply deprived because

they were excluded from this privilege. The less husky pallbearers should be distributed so that they don't have to lift too much. Indeed, if the box is too heavy, it suggests that the family may have been extravagant in choosing it. Remember also to be careful not to call upon persons with serious heart or back problems. There are more such than we commonly realize.

At a committal service, too, there can be family participation. At my wife's interment I recited one of her favorite poems and helped lower the box into the ground. Family members may be encouraged to start filling in the grave. Such things are emotionally helpful to the survivors.

An important decision to be made in planning a funeral service is the choice between an open or closed casket. It is the overwhelming preference of clergymen — Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish — that the casket be closed. In many cases the viewing of the remains is confined to family members and takes place before the funeral. When family members have been with the body at death or soon after, no later viewing is necessary.

A good "memory image," as funeral directors call it, may be created without viewing the body. Personal reminiscences of the living person can usually generate a better image than viewing the "restored" body.

There are, however, times when cosmetic restoration can be helpful, as when relatives from far away wish to see the body. This does not necessarily require a public viewing. Sensitivity to the wishes of the family should be the key to decisions in this matter.

If a service is held with the casket present, it may be covered with a gray cloth (or pall) as is done, for instance, in Episcopal churches. Thus a solid bronze casket carries no more prestige than a plywood box. This symbolizes the belief that we are all equal in death and helps focus on the spiritual significance of the occasion.

### *Memorial Services*

A memorial service performs much the same function as a funeral service, but tends to have a more positive atmosphere. This is mainly because it is focused on the values of the person who has died instead of on the dead body.

Members of the family should be encouraged — but never pressured — to speak or to offer songs or prayers as they may choose. The following experience is an example of how helpful a memorial service can be, with appropriate family participation.

A friend of mine lost a grown daughter in an automobile accident.

He loved her dearly, but there had been some stress between them, and this made her death doubly hard for him. I went to see him and his wife. It happened that I, too, had lost a daughter some time before in a similar accident.

The family were not members of the Society of Friends, but I offered to arrange a memorial service in the Friends Meeting House and suggested that the father might like to speak at such a meeting. They accepted the offer, but he wasn't sure he would be able to speak. However, he called me shortly afterward and said he did indeed want to speak and wanted me to preside.

At the service, the meeting room was decorated with wildflowers and on the mantle was a painting done by the young woman. Her former music teacher played a piece she had especially liked. Then I spoke, saying that we had gathered in the girl's memory and that any who felt moved to speak should feel free to do so. Then the father got up. In his hand was a bunch of little cards, each with a reminder of some incident from his daughter's life, starting from early childhood. He spoke with difficulty at first, but soon became more fluent. As he continued to relate happy memories, a faraway look came into his eyes and he began to smile, and the assembled friends smiled with him.

His wife thought he was speaking too long and tried to catch his eye, but their son, seated next to her, said "Let him talk." And he did, for quite a while. When he sat down there was a period of silence, then their friends spoke in turn, spontaneously, words of comfort and philosophy and reminiscence. When the speaking ran its course and the service was over, it was dark outside. We carried a few chairs into the yard and set candles on them. Friends moved freely inside and outside, visiting with the family and each other. That meeting was, as any good funeral or memorial service should be, the point at which the family could begin to resume normal life and look to the future. They expressed the warmest appreciation.

There was an interesting sequel when a few weeks later the father had occasion to attend the funeral of a business colleague. It was a strictly conventional service at which the minister delivered a cut-and-dried oration — and that was it. My friend was struck by the contrast between the services and was angry at the impersonal and empty character of his friend's funeral.

### *Self-Planned Services*

Some people like to plan their own services. These may be regular funeral services for which the person has selected the readings and music and perhaps the persons to do the readings. Some have planned that their family and friends shall simply come together for a social

evening in their memory, with refreshments and fellowship, and perhaps entertainment arranged by the one who has died. Some people make recordings of readings or music to be played at their funeral or memorial services.

### *Multiple Services*

It is often desirable to hold more than one gathering in cases where different groups or distant places are involved. On the occasion of my wife's death, one gathering was held in North Carolina and another in Ohio, and I spoke at both.

Sometimes friends or colleagues in a remote place hold a memorial service independently. This should be fully reported to the family, who will take comfort from it.

### *No Service at All*

Is it ever appropriate to have no funeral or memorial service at all? Yes, under some circumstances this is entirely appropriate. For instance, if the person wanted it that way, the family may properly comply with that wish.

Recently, a young man was killed in an accident two thousand miles from his parents' home. It had been years since he lived with his parents. His work kept him moving from place to place and he had lost contact with his boyhood friends. His parents quite properly decided not to hold a formal service. Friends of the family called at their home to express their love and sympathy.

While death ceremonies do in most cases meet an important need, the decision not to hold a service in a particular situation may be entirely appropriate.

### *Combination Programs*

A mixture of programming and spontaneous contributions is often a good arrangement. Commonly the program starts with music while people are gathering. If family members or friends are musicians, it is appropriate for them to play. Personal participation is more important than the technical excellence of recorded music. The latter can be used if no musicians are available.

After the opening music an appropriate reading is in order, either poetry or prose. Best of all is some bit of inspirational writing by the person who has died, if this is available. A few suitable selections are offered in Appendix 7, "Sample Death Ceremonies."

Following the reading a brief talk may be given relating to the person who has died. This can be followed by more music and another reading. Attenders can then be invited to share their thoughts, feelings and memories. When this seems to have run its course, there can be more music followed, if desired, by a prayer and/or a period of silence. Attenders should be invited to remain afterwards to visit.

#### *Ceremonies on the Death of the Very Young*

The tragic death of a young child presents special problems because of the greater guilt and anger often mingled with the family's grief. If the memorial service is handled wisely the love the parents had for the child often can be channeled into greater affection for one another and for their surviving children. A minister conducting a service can develop this concept, or an attender, if the meeting allows for participation.

The death ceremony for a baby will naturally be less extensive than for an adult or older child, though it should provide an opportunity for friends to give emotional support. It is important to have a ceremony, if only a modest one.

In the case of a stillborn infant, it is well for the family to have a simple ceremony of their own, giving the child a name, recognizing it as a member of the family and honoring its birth and death. Miscarriages and abortions also involve grief, and an informal ceremony can be very helpful. See Chapter 3, "Bereavement," for additional suggestions.

#### *How to Plan a Service*

Ideally the family should sit down together, along with their clergyman if they have one, and talk it over. Ann Baty describes this well: "You reminisce, you recall things he said, things he wrote, his ideals, his goals, his plans, his affections — even the annoying things he did. You look over old snapshots. You talk about him and you think about him. From these reflections you begin to plan your ceremony of remembrance." This is a wholesome process that can do much to begin emotional healing.

**Time.** The time usually preferred for a memorial service is the same as for a funeral service — two or three days after the death. Evenings and weekends are preferable so that more people can attend. The timing may be modified to meet individual situations, as, for instance, if some member of the family is in the hospital or too far away to come until later. Additional ceremonies at a later date may be appropriate. After

my father's death there were two memorial gatherings, followed seven months later by a two day convocation in his memory attended by family and colleagues from far and wide.

**Place.** The place of meeting, too, depends on circumstances and should accommodate the expected attendance. To assemble a handful of people in a large hall or sanctuary is forlorn. To turn people away for lack of space is even worse. A familiar place is good. It may be a church or a living room — or even outdoors.

#### *The Format of a Memorial Service*

Here are a few basic components with which a memorial service may be planned and procedures to be considered. A service may be designed to use these components in any way the family prefers. Most religious groups have specific worship ceremonies for death, and a clergyman of that faith can assist in preparing and carrying out the plans.

Forms and liturgies may be adapted to include many of the following elements and will in turn suggest other forms and content. Most forms of ritual permit greater flexibility than is generally used. Don't be afraid to express your wishes and explore possibilities.

**Instrumental Music.** While people are gathering, it is often good to have some muted organ music, if in a church, or quiet recorded music elsewhere. Or the attenders can gather in silence and have the service begin with music. Music by family and friends is best of all.

I recall a memorial service in my own family, held in a yard beneath the trees, in which by prearrangement the sound of musical chimes from a nearby church (of a different denomination) came through the trees beautifully at just the right time. Music can be interspersed in the program, too, if desired, or used to close it.

**Singing.** This is a very desirable form of music for a service, since it allows for participation by family and friends. Unless the song or songs are well known to the attenders, it is good to have song sheets or hymn books available. If printed or duplicated programs are used, words of the songs may be included. Solo or ensemble singing can have a place, especially if done by friends or members of the family. Always encourage family participation.

**The Presiding Function.** One individual, generally a minister or a friend of the family, customarily presides, stating the purpose of the gathering and setting the program in motion. This person may or may not also contribute remarks, readings and prayers. If attenders are

invited to take part the presiding person will explain when and how this is to be done. The presiding person also signals the end of the service.

**Prayers.** For many families, depending on their practice and belief, this is an important part of the service. Prayers may be offered by the minister or other presiding person or by any family member or friend.

**Biographical Remarks.** It is often appropriate to give a biographical account of the person's life at the outset of the service. This adds interest and meaning to the service and provides an opportunity for family participation.

**Reminiscences.** Whether programmed or unprogrammed, these add greatly to the service and help to convey in depth some feeling of the person's life and values. Family members especially should be encouraged to offer their thoughts and remembrings.

Sometimes certain family members and friends are asked specifically to contribute their recollections, and these are scheduled in sequence to be the main part of the program. I recall a fine memorial service in which a series of speakers had the same topic: "I remember Charlotte."

Don't avoid humorous reminiscences or incidents that may have involved some frustration. If presented in good taste, these carry overtones of affection and a fuller picture of the person's life and personality.

**Visual Materials.** The use of films, slides or pictures is sometimes appropriate, if such material is available. A family member, preferably, should do the narrating. A small display of photographs from the life of the person is always appropriate. Sometimes the family likes to have articles present that remind them of the person who has died and that add a touch of intimacy or color. This may take the form of craft or art work, a favorite toy in the case of a child, or something connected with an adult's hobby or profession.

**Silence.** Though most commonly associated with Quakers, this practice is observed in many groups, with a period of silence included as part of the service.

**Readings.** There is a wealth of beautiful and inspiring poetry, prose and scripture to draw upon. The Bible is a rich source. Likewise the writings of Kahlil Gibran, Rabindranath Tagore and others. These readings can be programmed or, in the case of unprogrammed services, they can be offered by attenders. It is very appropriate to include writings of the person who has died, if available. A few selected readings and sources are listed in Appendix 7, "Sample Death Ceremonies."

**Unprogrammed Contributions.** These may constitute the entire service, following the opening music, perhaps a biographical sketch, and introductory remarks in which the attenders are invited to speak. Or they may be called for later in the service, or omitted entirely. It is well for the presiding person to suggest that at least a short period of silence be allowed between speakings.

Care should be taken that time for unprogrammed contributions not be cut short. I have known family members who carried regrets for years that they were cut off from speaking because the service was "running too long."

A word of caution: If the attenders are unfamiliar with the practice of unprogrammed speaking, it may be well to have a few people prepared in advance to begin the speaking.

**Visiting After the Service.** It is often desirable for attenders to have an opportunity to visit informally after the service, if facilities allow for this.

**Refreshments.** The serving of refreshments during the visiting is a pleasant practice that facilitates conversation. Some may wish to serve a meal after the funeral or memorial service. The custom of the funeral feast is well known. In theory this is supplied by the family of the deceased, but in common practice, it is thoughtful friends and neighbors who supply the food and do the work.

### *Flexibility*

Established procedures are often useful, but they need not be binding. One memorial service was held with everyone seated in a circle. At the close of the service they all stood and joined hands to sing a final song together. Another service (for a golfer) was held as a walking party across a golf course, winding up at the club house for refreshments. Another took the form of a reception at the home of the family whose member had died.

### *Printed Programs*

Programs are not necessary, but sometimes are nice to have. If a service is largely unprogrammed, there is no need for a printed program. If it is highly programmed and especially if it involves group singing, then a program, including the words of songs, can be helpful. This will depend partly on the availability of duplicating equipment. If the service is held in a church, the church may have printed program blanks which can be used. A longer program, perhaps with the full text

of the ceremony, also can be used as a death announcement to mail to those who could not attend. This may include a biographical sketch and some personal tributes.

### Remember

Grief has many dimensions, which are experienced by different people in different ways. Likewise death ceremonies take many forms. As Ann Bay says, do not be coerced into passive acceptance of a conventional pattern; do not be afraid to be creative. Remember that death is a natural event and an occasion for the honest expression of your deepest values.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY/CHAPTER 7 (See also Appendices I and 7)

*Bittersweet . . . hello goodbye*, Sister Jane Marie Lamb, OP, Belleville, IL: SHARE National Office, 1988. An extensive resource in planning farewell rituals when a baby dies.

*Bridging the Bereavement Gap: A Manual for the Preparation and Programming of Hospice Bereavement Services*, Donna O'Toole. Bunnsville, NC 28714: Rainbow Connection, 1985.

*Final Celebrations*, K. Sublette and M. Flagg. Ventura, CA: Pathfinder Publishing, 1992. A guide to assist individuals and families plan and personalize funeral and memorial ceremonies as a celebration of life.

*Reminiscing Together*, H. Thorshheim & B. Roberts. An instructive book of exercises and activities to strengthen memories. Written especially for those growing older, this book is rich in ideas on how people of all ages can access the past. Techniques are taught on how the senses can be used to stimulate memory — through photographs and pictures, songs and sounds, smells, tastes, and touch. Ideas throughout on the use of stories to bridge generations and build continuity and community with others.

*Rituals for Living and Dying*, David Feinstein and Peg Elliot Mayo. Harper Collins, CA, 1992. The authors explain the importance and role of ritual in life and death and offer well-crafted step-by-step structured activities and wise insights to help readers confronting the grief of illness or loss to fashion rituals and rites of passage that nurture relationships, ease transitions and feed the spirit. An insightful book for individuals and families facing loss and for those working with them.

## 8 HOW THE DEAD CAN HELP THE LIVING

*This chapter is essentially a tract — an urgent appeal for human solidarity, to persuade people to think in terms of life and to share with the living any organs or tissues which, at the time of death, they or their loved ones no longer need. To bury or burn organs or tissues needed by the living is a form of blasphemy against life. Let us not be guilty of it. As for myself, I'm leaving my entire body for medical education.*

*This chapter sets forth the options and the procedures for various types of donations. Directories of medical schools and eye banks, addresses of helpful organizations, and information on transplantation of specific organs will be found in Appendix 8, "Anatomical Gifts."*

Poet Robert Test states the issue beautifully:

The day will come when my body will lie upon a white sheet tucked neatly under the four corners of a mattress, located in a hospital busily occupied with the living and the dying. At a certain moment a doctor will determine that my brain has ceased to function and that, for all intents and purposes, my life has stopped.

When that happens, do not attempt to instill artificial life into my body by the use of a machine and don't call this my deathbed. Let it be called the Bed of Life, and let my body be taken from it to help others lead fuller lives.

Give my sight to the man who has never seen a sunrise, a baby's face or love in the eyes of a woman. Give my heart to the person whose own heart has caused nothing but endless days of pain. Give my blood to the teenager who was pulled from the wreckage of his car, so that he may live to see his grandchildren play. Give my kidneys to a person who depends upon a machine to exist from week to week. Take my bones, every muscle, every fiber and nerve in my body and find a way to make a crippled child walk. Explore every corner of my brain. Take my cells, if necessary, and let them grow so that, someday, a speechless boy will shout at the

- TEXAS:** *Austin:* Austin Mem. & Burial Information Soc., Box 4382 78765-4382 (512) 477-5238  
*Dallas:* Mem. Soc. of North Texas, 4015 Normandy 75205 (215) 528-6006  
*Denton:* Memorial Society of North Texas, 4015 Normandy, Dallas 75205 (800) 371-2221 (for use in Dallas/Ft. Worth area only)  
*El Paso:* Mem. Soc. of El Paso, Box 4951 79914-4951 (505) 824-4565  
*Fort Worth:* Memorial Society of North Texas, 1959 Sandy Lane 76112 (800) 371-2221 (for use in Dallas-Ft. Worth area only)  
*Houston:* Houston Area Memorial Society, 5200 Fannin St. 77004-5899 (713) 526-4267  
*Lubbock:* Lubbock Area Mem. Soc., Box 6562 79413-6562 (214) 528-6006  
*San Antonio:* San Antonio Memorial Society, 7150 Interstate 10 West 78213 (210) 341-2213  
*Wichita Falls:* Memorial Society of North Texas, 4015 Normandy, Dallas 75205 (800) 371-2221 (for use in Dallas/Ft. Worth area only)
- UTAH:** *Salt Lake City:* Utah Mem. Assn., 307 M St. 84103 (801) 581-6608
- VERMONT:** *Burlington:* Vermont Mem. Soc., Bx 67 05401-0067 (802) 862-7474
- VIRGINIA:** *Alexandria:* Mt. Vernon Mem. Soc., 1909 Windmill Lane 22307 (703) 765-5950
- Arlington:* Mem. Soc. of Northern Va., 4444 Arlington Blvd. 22204 (703) 271-9240  
*Charlottesville:* Memorial Planning Society of the Piedmont, 717 Rugby Rd. 22903 (804) 293-8179  
*Richmond:* Memorial Society of Gr. Richmond, P.O. Box 29315 23229-9315 (804) 285-9157  
*Virginia Beach:* Memorial Society of Tidewater, Box 4621 23454-4621 (804) 481-2991
- WASHINGTON:** *Seattle:* People's Memorial Association, 2366 Eastlake Ave. E. 98102 (206) 325-0489  
*Spokane:* Spokane Mem. Assn., Box 13613 99213-13613 (509) 924-8400  
*Yakima:* Mem. Soc. of Central Wash., POB 379 98907-0379 (509) 452-1712
- WEST VIRGINIA:** (Northeast West Virginia served by Maryland Memorial Society)
- WISCONSIN:** *Egg Harbor:* Mem. Soc. of Door County, 6900 Lost Lake Road 54209 (414) 868-3136  
*Madison:* Mem. Soc. of Madison, 5235 Harbor Ct. 53705 (608) 255-8333  
*Milwaukee:* Fun. & Mem. Soc. of Greater Milwaukee, 13001 W. North Ave., Brookfield 53005 (414) 782-5335  
*Racine:* Mem. Soc. of SE Wisconsin, 6900 Lost Lake Road, Egg Harbor 54209-9231 (414) 552-8540

## APPENDIX 7 / Sample Death Ceremonies

*Editor's Note: Most religious traditions include death services. The ceremonies in this appendix supplement these traditional services.*

### Memorial Services

On the following pages are several memorial services, each of which has been selected for some feature that seemed especially interesting. They have been compiled by Ann Baby of the Bowling Green, Ohio Memorial Society. Each of the first seven was written for a particular person who had died. Of the others, one is a general type of service that can be used for anyone. It is followed by two committal services — one for burial and one for cremation. The children's "Good-bye Service" is not intended for a formal service but is meant to be used to help a child or children to cope with a grievous loss.

### 1. Service with Flower Communion

The memorial service for Esme Harold Naaman was prepared by a friend. Esme's death had ended several months of loving care given by friends who made it possible for him to die at home.

An order of service was mimeographed and folded into a booklet of ten pages plus cover. It contained the full text of all the selections that were used. It was mailed to friends and family who could not attend and served, for some, as a notice of Esme's death. The cover had his name and the dates of his birth and death with a paragraph about the kind of person he was.

After an interval of music by Bach and Brahms, as people gathered, the service began with these words: "We are a group of friends gathered together to pay loving tribute to Esme Naaman and to share with his family and each other our appreciation of a rare and remarkable human being."

Words written about him by a friend or two were read, as were a couple of letters that he had received (from brother and son) and which contained revealing sentiments. There were other readings: from *Voice of the Desert* by Joseph Wood Krutch, from *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran and from Kenneth L. Patton. There were intervals of music (Sibelius, Croft, Mozart, Bach) and a

short eulogy. A statement of the kind of person Esme had been was read by the minister.

Finally a friend said, "We invite you to take a blossom in our diverse remembrances of Esme." To the accompaniment of Bach's "Vater Unser in Himmelfahrt," four friends passed shallow baskets of chrysanthemum blossoms in yellow, bronze and white as a flower communion; after that was a recitation of The Lord's Prayer and then a recessional by Bach.

The service was held in a Unitarian Church but was conducted by lay friends, rather than by the minister. The selections written by Kenneth L. Patton were *The Measure of Sorrow* and *Our Own Good-Byes*.

## II. Service Using Writings of the Deceased

Marcos Romero was a very creative young man from South America. While attending college in the United States, he was killed in a motorcycle accident. His friends put together this memorial service, using Marcos' own writings. The short service was held in a room in one of the college halls, and it was conducted entirely by students, his friends.

A program was printed and titled "Remembering Marcos Romero, A service of Readings and Reflections." Date and place of the service also were printed on the cover.

The service began with a reading by a friend, followed by this litany:

LOVE ONE ANOTHER  
Support one another's efforts  
LOVE ONE ANOTHER  
Rejoice in another's fulfillment  
LOVE ONE ANOTHER  
Support each other through difficult times  
LOVE ONE ANOTHER  
Rejoice together in times of rejoicing  
LOVE ONE ANOTHER

Friends read from Marcos' writings, then sang a song written for Marcos by a friend. "Morning Has Broken" was sung by the group (the words were printed on the program).

There was a benediction from Marcos' writings "Life is a matter of doing whatever has to be done with as much love as possible. By love, I mean concentration and dedication of one's life. I find that it is not so important to plan for the future, but to love everything we do and to let go and flow as a river flows."

The service ended with the reading of a poem written by Marcos Romero, titled "Good-bye: Dedicated to All Those Friends of Mine Who Listen."

## III. Service with Organ Music

This service was arranged by friends of the deceased and was conducted by them. Harold Thomas Marlow had cared for his mother for many years until

she died; he never married. After his mother died, he spent his time and energy working for his church; he left everything he had to the church.

The church had an organ and an organist, and most of the music was played by the organist. The service:

Prelude Trumpet Tune in C and Trumpet Tune in D  
— Purcell

Opening Words "Reasons for a Funeral or Memorial Service"  
— Rev. Roy Phillips

We do best in our present and later lives if, when one we love dies, we bring together those whose lives were touched significantly by the life of the one who has died. This is the reason for a funeral or a memorial service.

While such services have been understood in many varying ways, their human function is to set an experiential marker at the endpoint of life, to place a cairn at the conclusion of one human being's journey.

The cairns along a wilderness trail are built of earth rocks of various shapes and sizes. The memorial cairn at the end of a life is also a composite, but an experiential one. It is made up of the memories, the thoughts and the feelings of all who are gathered in the one place together. It is a recollection (a re-collection) of what was for a time together and is now scattered and scattering. Here is the one we knew. This is how our lives were touched by that life. Here is what we think and how we feel.

The words spoken in the literal funeral or memorial service are not themselves the marker. The spoken words are evokers of experiences — thoughts, feelings, memories — within the people of the gathered group. These experiences are the memorial cairn.

At the end of a life, we compose a symphony an ordered creation whose notes and themes are the experiences of the people gathered. Themes dark and bright are sounded to recollect and to order the impact of the life of the one who had died — honestly, fully, tenderly — and in the spirit of thanksgiving for the quality of that lived life.

The words of a memorial service should strive to evoke remembrance, thanksgiving, a sense of the uniqueness of the person's life, a sense of the privilege of having known that person, a sense of loss, of sadness, a feeling of emptiness, of unsureness and a hint that the ending of this life is a rehearsal of what is to come for every one of us. The words should evoke a sense of trust in the slow, but steady, grace of healing and the affirmation that we can live on and will live on, blessed by that life and by the memory of the one who once was and is now gone, but who is and will be present in the world, and in us in mysterious and hidden ways.

Harold Thomas Marlow, scholar, churchman, friend, has died. We are gathered here to pay honor to his spirit and to the life he lived, and to consecrate his memory. The readings and music speak of him; reflect his spirit in life; reflect our feeling for him, and our feeling at this time.

Introit "Well-Tempered Clavichord"

— Bach