



Hospice Austin
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Honoring Your Loved One with a Zoom Memorial



Inviting Participants: Technical Considerations

- Set a date for the Zoom Memorial that works for the family. Take into account that mourners may want some time to plan the content of the service and to recover from their initial grieving. It may also take some time to invite participants. Families may choose to hold the memorial 3-4 weeks after a loved one's death. However, the memorial may occur earlier if the family would like a live, graveside component to be part of the Zoom Memorial.
- Obtain cell phone numbers or emails of attendees using your loved one's email/Facebook/cell phone contacts to reach out individually to attendees.
- If your loved one was a member of a social group, and you do not have individual contact information for each member of the group, identify a trusted member from this group who can appropriately and confidentially distribute the invitation to others in the group.
- Send out a Save the Date, so invitees can clear their schedules. (This is optional.)
- Seek out the help of someone who is well-versed in Zoom to set up the meeting link. Consider a family member or friend who is comfortable with technology. Note: the most basic Zoom license only enables 40-minute meetings. Consider upgrading from the basic membership (it's a small monthly charge, and you can cancel anytime) if you need a longer memorial.
- Send out the particular Zoom meeting link, phone number, and date to all invitees.
- When distributing the link to the invitees, remember to consider differences in time zones. Perhaps tailor the invite to reflect the time of the meeting in the recipient's time zone.
- If you post the actual Zoom meeting link in "public" places online (like the obituary), consider the possibility that strangers may see this and seek to disrupt the Zoom Memorial.

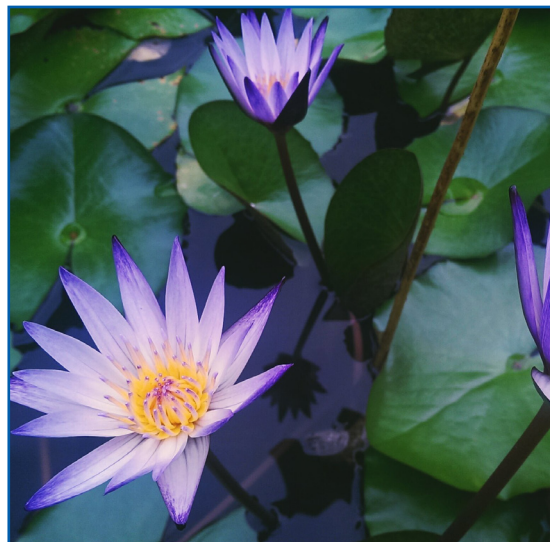
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Including a Small Live Gathering on Zoom

- If the family will be gathering for a smaller, live memorial in advance of the Zoom Memorial, consider recording a video at the live service. You may want to share some of this footage at the Zoom Memorial so that participants can witness the gathering at graveside, etc.
- Alternatively, if some can gather at graveside or other location during the Zoom Memorial, a tech-saavy person can share their screen with others. Family members will want to give this task to someone who will not be overwhelmed with grief.



Content of the Memorial: Ideas

- Create an outline of the memorial service. Make this event personal and meaningful. Seek input from other family members, if desired. Family/friends can:
 - read a meaningful passage, poem, etc.
 - read the obituary
 - offer a prayer
 - share spontaneously
 - lead everyone in a personal candle lighting (see below)
- Video footage from the live graveside gathering can be shared with the Memorial participants.
- Consider the order of service. For example, you may insert the slideshow in the middle of general sharing to vary the energy.

Smooth execution of the Zoom Memorial

- Select a moderator who can run the actual meeting so that loved ones can focus on mourning, not technology. Provide your outline to the moderator in advance. Ideas:
 - Hire/invite a friend who is a gifted facilitator
 - Hire/invite chaplain or other religious clergy
 - Family member who will have the composure to facilitate
- The moderator can describe the flow of the meeting to participants at the beginning. The moderator can encourage people to turn on their video to be seen, if they are comfortable doing so. If people wish to remain more anonymous to other participants, they can click on the three dots in their box for Gallery View and rename themselves.
- If desired, create a slideshow video and/or powerpoint (some funeral homes provide this service) of your loved one. Have someone “share their screen” during this part of the meeting. Arrange this in advance with the moderator for smooth transitions.
 - If individuals want to share something from their computer (a treasured picture, for example), they could ask to share their screen, or this could be planned in advance on the outline.
- Consider having certain family/friends have an “assigned” slot on the outline to share a eulogy. Moderator can “call on them” at a certain point in the service.

- Consider having the moderator open up the meeting for general sharing as people are led. Participants can use the “raised hand” function on Zoom or raise their hand physically. The moderator will take note and “call on” people.
 - o In a larger meeting, consider asking the moderator to place a timer on at the start of each share if you desire to hear from a breadth of people. The moderator can set a gentle sound to go off at the end of 3 minutes to encourage the participant to wrap up their remarks.
 - o If you choose to use a timer, the moderator can explain this at the beginning of the meeting.
 - o In smaller meetings, a timer may not be necessary.

Sample Order of Service

Welcome – by Facilitator (Clergy or Family Officiant)

“We are assembled here today to pay respects to our loved one (NAME) — to remember them with grace and abundance of heart. He/she had an impact on all of us, so we take this brief time to recognize his/her death.

Even in the midst of our suffering and within this virtual connection, our hearts are still connected



by the seeds of love that our beloved planted within each of us during his/her life. We recognize the eternal gift of those seeds in our lives.”

Opening Prayer

- Facilitator/Clergy reads Psalm 23 or another verse that is special to the family.
- Facilitator or family member - read short reflection eulogy - no longer than 5-7 minutes (1.5 pages in length double-spaced)

Sharing of Memories

Family member or speaker then opens up to people on Zoom to share remembrances of family member – (have this pre-planned so the facilitator has the names and is able to keep the memorial organized.)

“Now, I welcome those loved ones who want to speak for a few minutes to share remembrances of our dear loved one.”

Remembrances

These can even be pre-recorded and shared with a picture of the family member speaking (if families feel more comfortable doing it that way.)

Another option during this time is to have family/loved ones share:

“These words describe (name).” (List three to five words, then tell a short story about why each word is a potent descriptor of your loved one and his/her character.)

Slideshow of pictures

After the remembrances, you can play a pre-recorded slideshow of photos with music playing in the background.

Closing

The Facilitator ends the service with quote – (see example below):

“Because we are not able to hold hands in this virtual service with one another, let us instead hold our hearts together for a moment as a closing. May I ask that each of you put your hand to your heart as we make a sacred circle, heart to heart together.”

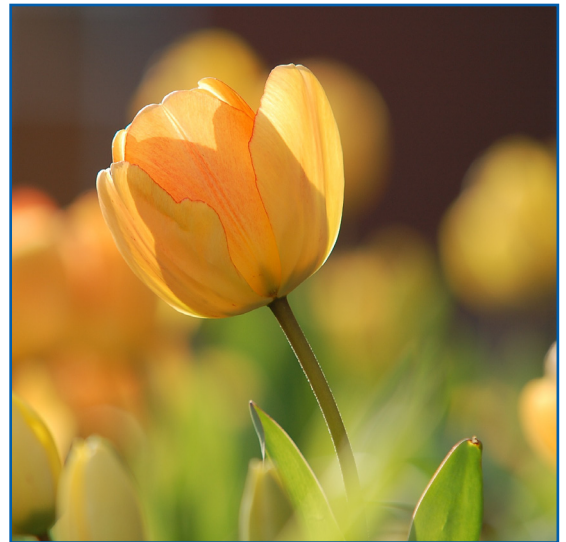
“(Name), we bless your memory with great love for you, for you have rooted your love upon our hearts. Go your way in peace and may your memory be a blessing to all who knew you. Amen.”

Content Ideas

Poem

We Remember Them

In the rising of the sun and in its going down,
we remember them.
In the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter,
we remember them.
In the opening of buds and in the rebirth of spring,
we remember them.
In the blueness of the sky and in the warmth of summer,
we remember them.
In the rustling of leaves and in the beauty of autumn,
we remember them.
In the beginning of the year and when it ends,
we remember them.
When we are weary and in need of strength,
we remember them.
When we are lost and sick at heart,
we remember them.
When we have joys we yearn to share,
we remember them.
So long as we live, they too shall live,
for they are now a part of us, as
we remember them.



Candle Lighting Ceremony

(You may welcome participants to light one candle in their own space.)

Litany of Candles

OPENING: We now light 5 candles to represent the light we hope will emerge from this darkness and to honor our loved ones whose presence is with us now.

We light these 5 candles for our grief, for our courage, for our memories, for our love, and for our hope.

CANDLE 1: The first candle represents our grief. The pain of losing you is intense. It reminds us of the depth of our feelings for you.

CANDLE 2: The second candle represents our courage – our courage to confront our sorrow and our grief, our courage to feel, and our courage to emerge from our grief when the time comes.

CANDLE 3: The third candle is in your memory – the times we laughed, the times we cried, the times we were angry with each other, the funny things you did, and the caring and joy you gave us.

CANDLE 4: The fourth candle is the light of love. We hold a special place in our hearts that will always be reserved for you. We take you wherever we go.

CANDLE 5: The final candle is the light of hope. It reminds us of your love for us and the memories of you that are ours forever. May the glow of the flame continue to be our source of hope as we continue forward.



Bible Verses

Bible verses for funerals that may bring comfort and hope for Christians mourning the death of a loved one, or make for a fitting eulogy.

Romans 6:4

We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

Philippians 3:20-21

But our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power which enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Isaiah 41:10

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Psalms 34:18

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

Matthew 5:4

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Corinthians 5:1

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.

Psalms 46:1-2

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea.

Psalms 23:4

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.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-4

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance...

Matthew 11:28-30

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."





Blessings/Ceremonies from Other Faiths

The late Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel often quoted the ancient Hasidic teaching that offered three pathways through grief. **The first path is the way of tears.** To mourn is to touch directly the heart of divine compassion. And just as ice must melt before it can begin to flow, we, too, must become liquid before we can flow into the healing power of love. Tears have been a classic spiritual way of doing this. And so when your tears come, welcome them. They are the language of your heart.

The second path through grief is the way of silence. Sometimes in the midst of our tears or when it seems we have no more tears to shed, we may notice a deep and profound silence within where our relationship with our loved one once lived. There is often the urge to fill that silence with sound, activity, noise, and movement. It is important, however, to let the silence simply be. To allow it to be a place of unknowing, attention and noticing.

After enough time has passed we may find within our broken heart, softened by our tears and allowed the silence it needs to mend, a creative urge rising up. A need to find meaning in our pain. **This is the third path through grief: the path of singing.** It is a way of honoring your love; of tending your grief; of weaving the song of life through the experience of loss. Wherever you find yourself on the path, know that you are not alone. There are others who walk this path alongside you. And together, even virtually, we will see each other through.

Jewish Prayer for Departed

Exalted, compassionate God, grant perfect peace in Your sheltering Presence, among the holy and the pure who shine with the splendor of the firmament, to the soul of our dear one who has gone to his eternal home. May his soul be bound up in the bond of life. The Lord is his portion. May he rest in peace. And let us say: Amen.

Hindu

na jaayate' mriyate' vaa kadaachin naayam bhuthva bhavithaa na bhooyah: / ajo nityah
saasvato'yam puraano na hanyate' hanyamaane' sareere'

The Spirit is neither born nor does it die at any time. It does not come into being or cease to exist. It is unborn, eternal, permanent, and primeval. The Spirit is not destroyed when the body is destroyed. (2.20)

acche'dyo' yam adhaahyo' yam akle'dhyo' sya eva cha / nityah sarva-gathah sthaanoor achalo'
yam sanaathanah

Weapons do not cut this Spirit, fire does not burn it, water does not make it wet, and the wind does not make it dry. The Spirit cannot be cut, burned, wet, or dried. It is eternal, all-pervading, changeless, immovable, and primeval. Atma is beyond space and time. (2.23-24)

Muslim

O Allah, ease upon him his matters, and make light for him whatever comes hereafter, and honor him with Your meeting and make that which he has gone to better than that which he came out from.

Agnostic Poem/Blessing

All of you must know how much I loved you.
Never did I stint on saying so.
In death you were the song that let me go.
To sleep in beauty, dancing as I sang you.
And though I'm gone, don't think that I'll forget you.
Just think of me as waiting, even though,
Agnostic or believer, you may know
No certainty beyond what love can tell you.
Each of you still lives within my heart.
Though I am not, I am. So is the truth
Opposed to sense, more relevant than thought.
What is, is often what could never be.
Nor need you grieve, though we may seem apart.
Sing with me, as we look back with ruth,
Each the source of what sweet balm we sought,
No mother and children more in touch than we,
Deep within life's unsolved mystery.

- Nicholas Gordon



Buddhist

May all be free from sorrow, and the causes of sorrow,
May all never be separated from the sacred happiness
which is sorrowless.

Remember Me

To the Living, I am gone,
To the sorrowful, I will never return;
To my loved ones, I am at peace.
To the faithful, I have never left.
Talk to me, and I will hear,
Your prayers, they comfort me,
Your laughter makes me laugh,
but don't weep for me,
I'm with Eternal Love.
You have me in your heart and I keep you in Eternal Love.
I hold your heart in mine Eternally.

- Anonymous



Sanctum

I built a tiny garden
In a corner of my heart
I kept it just for lovely things
And bade all else depart
And ever was there music
And flowers blossomed fair;
And never was it perfect
Until you entered there
Now your Flowers will bloom forever in our hearts.
- Beulah B. Malkin

Do Not Stand At My Grave And Weep

"Do not stand at my grave and weep
I am not there.
I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow.
I am the diamond glints on snow.
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.
I am the gentle autumn's rain..."
- Mary Frye

The Irish have a saying that a pain shared is a pain halved. As humans, we are made for proximity, especially in times of great transition and uncertainty. The global pandemic has interrupted our time-tested rituals, separating us from the very people we long to be near, requiring us to shoulder burdens we would ordinarily share. For many of us, that has made this season of grief exceedingly difficult.

If there is anything Hospice Austin can do to help you during this time, please call us at (512) 342-4700. We have nondenominational chaplains who may be able to help you with your Zoom Memorial. We also offer bereavement services including counseling, online support groups, and a monthly online interactive webinar. You can learn more at HospiceAustin.org/bereavement.

Peace and comfort to you and your loved ones.

