

**PLANNING FOR YOUR OWN  
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST MEMORIAL SERVICE**

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**Introduction**

A Memorial Service is one of the best public services done by Unitarian Universalists. Because it focuses on celebrating the life and achievements of the person who has died in an individual way rather than relying on rote ritual, it allows for and encourages participation by family and friends. Time and again, people from other denominations who attend a UU Memorial Service are impressed by its warmth and its personal nature. This planning guide is intended to help you shape your own Memorial Service.

**Why would you want to plan your own Memorial Service?**

One of the best reasons is so that your survivors will know your wishes. After all, the service is really for the survivors. Another reason is that you will now have the last word!

**Information needed for church records:**

**Full name**\_\_\_\_\_

**Date of Birth**\_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Person and relationship**\_\_\_\_\_

**Phone number of contact person**\_\_\_\_\_

**Address**\_\_\_\_\_

**Elements of a Memorial Service:**

**Place:** Where would you like the service to be held? In the church? In a funeral parlour? In someone's home?

**Music:** Is there a favourite piece of music you would like played?

Do you have a CD or tape of this music?

Would you like to have live music performed? By whom?

What hymns would you like sung?

**Participants:** Who would you like to officiate at your service? Ministers and Lay Chaplains are trained for this and have many resources to draw on, but anyone can officiate at a funeral or memorial service.

Is there someone other than the officiant whom you would like to do the eulogy? Make sure that that person is comfortable in the role and can read aloud well.

Would you like to have family members and/or friends share memories they hold dear? Who would these people be?

**Readings:**

Do you have a favourite poem?

Have you written anything yourself which characterizes the way you think or have lived your life? Attached are two examples, one by Nammen Kremer and the other by Doreen Hunter, both of which were read in their Memorial Services. It is a powerful way for you to be present in your own voice.

**Eulogy:** The eulogy is the focal point of a funeral or memorial service. It paints a picture of the person who has died, and makes the service personal by stimulating the memories of the mourners. It should honestly remember and affirm the deceased, thereby giving value and honour to his or her character – how they lived life, touched others, and left an indelible mark on our common world.

### 3.

There are several ways to organize a eulogy:

**Chronologically:** Begins with the person's birth, their parents and siblings, place of birth, education, work experience, marriage and family, achievements.

**Theme:** Focuses on themes and builds around them.

Are you a gardener? Gardening involves getting your hands dirty, planning and implementing that plan, working for the future, creating a beautiful space that others share, sharing cuttings, bulbs, etc. My mother had beautiful roses in her garden and my children handed out long-stemmed roses to all the guests in a service at which I officiated.

Are you an artist or musician or crafter? Examples of artwork could be displayed, your own music played.

Parent/grandparent: Stress the contribution made by raising a family, being a supportive and loving spouse and parent.

Occupation: Impact on the world by being a teacher, doctor, farmer, writer, etc.

**Anecdotal:** Short eulogies by several people relating how you touched or influenced their life.

**Displays:** Photographs; work you have created such as paintings, a loaf of bread you baked, etc.

**Candles:** Several may be lit by children/ spouse, etc.  
One candle may be lit by the officiant and extinguished at end of service.

**Charitable Donations:** One way to continue doing good and to be remembered is to ask Memorial donations be made in your name to your church's Endowment Fund or to other charities. Have you thought of including a bequest to the church in your will?

**Conclusion:** How would you like to be remembered? What have you seen in other Memorial Services that you liked or that moved you?