

Ideas for an Online/Zoom Memorial Service

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editing, writing coaching, and other words with care

For Officiants/Presiders

- Ensure that your computer is set up in a well-lit, clean, and relatively formal space.
- Test your computer's video camera set up (or phone or tablet) prior to the service to make sure you have good light. Make sure you can reach a plug or other power source for the tech.
- If you are more comfortable standing while presiding, make sure you have a way to prop your computer up so that it's at approximately chest height, so as to have an even view of the top half of your body.
- If it's possible to have some formal elements (religious symbols, candles, flowers) in the scene, and visible to the camera, set these up as well.
- Hold your readings in a nice folder. Keep any necessary materials, such as matches, nearby and out-of-sight.
- It may provide for a smoother worship experience if someone who is tech-savvy and not a chief mourner can "host" the meeting, handle turning music on and off, or switching the microphone on and off between speakers.
- Use Zoom's settings for sharing audio if you'd like to include music. In "advanced settings," select "share computer audio" and then turn on the music in your computer's music player. This should stream music directly to all memorial participants, without also sharing your screen.
- Do a "dress rehearsal." Find someone who can be on the other end of a Zoom call to make sure that the music is being shared correctly, and so on.
- Include notes in the order of service about how this might be an awkward way to mourn, but we are in it together, even if we must be apart. Remind everyone about being patient with each other, with the technology, or with the chief mourners. Remind participants that any and all feelings, including unexpected feelings from the strangeness of mourning while being apart, are all right, and to be expected.
- These notes were compiled in a liberal Protestant/Unitarian Universalist context. They may or may not be applicable for your practices or denomination, but are meant in a spirit of support and caring.

Online/Zoom Memorial Service

To Send to Mourners and Participants in Advance

Before the Zoom Call: Setting the Scene

- You may wish to dress as you would for an in-person memorial service. (I've heard from attendees at other formal Zoom gatherings that fancy footwear is optional, of course!)
- If possible, given social distancing and avoidance of stores, consider putting flowers or candles in the background of your Zoom call.
- Out of respect for the family, take time to think about the background of your Zoom screen. Test out your camera setup beforehand. If possible, make sure your background isn't too cluttered, that there is enough light for you to be seen, and so on.

Joining the Zoom Call

- Click on the link to join the call. You may be asked to enter the meeting ID and password. This is to prevent unwanted visitors from joining the call.

Join Zoom Meeting
ENTER LINK HERE
Meeting ID: #####
Password: #####

- You may be asked about using computer audio. Select "yes" (unless you intend to dial in with a phone separately).
- You will also want to make sure your video is turned on. You should have options at the bottom of your screen for controlling both video camera and microphone.
- Please move your mouse over the upper right of your Zoom window (Mac), where you will see an option to turn on "Gallery View." This will allow you to see everyone's faces at once. These settings may be different on a PC.
- As an FYI, in conversation on Zoom, sometimes several people may speak at the same time, and this will be harder to understand than it would be if we were in person. Please mute yourself when not speaking, or try your best to avoid talking over other people, so that we can all hear each other. If you find you can't get a word in, you can raise your hand or wave so that it's clearer who's trying to speak next.
- Before the service, we will take some time to make sure everyone is comfortable with the platform, can see and/or hear, and has their screen set up as they'd like.

During the Memorial Service

- The host will mute everyone's microphones during the service, except if you are speaking.
- You may wish to switch from "Gallery View" to "Speaker View" so that you can see the main speaker's face more clearly.
- You may be asked to set aside food or drink, unless you are speaking and may need water.
- You may want to have tissues nearby, too.

- If you are speaking during the service, the Zoom “host” will unmute you so that you do not have to worry about doing this yourself. Please watch the screen to see if you need to hit “Allow Host to Unmute Me.”

After the Service

- During the postlude, you’re invited to gather light refreshments, tea, or coffee, in the spirit of a reception after a memorial service. You can unmute yourselves at this time.
- Invite a participant to offer a short grace before we join in eating in our separate spaces.
- Screen sharing offers a great way to play a slideshow of photos, which might spark memories or invite sharing stories or reflections.
- The family and friends may wish to remain in the call for time for conversation, sharing, remembering, and supporting.

“Leaving the Meeting”

- It’s all right to feel awkward about ending the gathering. Few people have ever been part of a Zoom memorial service before. When it comes time for each of us to leave, it may be nice to give a virtual hug, or some other special word of comfort to stand in for being able to offer physical presence.
- To leave the call, click “leave meeting” at the bottom of your screen.



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