

Funeral or Memorial Service Resources and Readings

- "A butterfly lights beside us like a sunbeam. And for a brief moment its glory and beauty belong to our world. But then it flies on again, and though we wish it could have stayed, we feel so lucky to have seen it...."

- For everything there is a season,
and a time for every matter under heaven:
A time to be born and a time to die;
A time to plant and a time to pluck up what is planted;
A time to break down, and a time to build up;
A time to weep, and a time to laugh;
A time to mourn, and a time to dance;
A time to seek, and a time to lose;
A time to keep, and a time to cast away;
A time for war, and a time for peace. **Ecclesiastes 3:1-8**

- We struggle against death with all our force, for it is our fundamental duty as living creatures to do so. But when, by virtue of the state of things, death comes, we experience that paradox of faith that causes us to abandon the struggle and affirm death as part of a greater plan for the universe as a whole. To love life so much, and to trust it so completely that we can affirm it even in its final act....this is [an] attitude that can calm and fortify us. The end is to love extravagantly the life that is greater than any one of us, seeing our own death as a physically necessary passage toward union with a greater wholeness. - **Teilhard deChardin** (roughly translated)

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Birth is a beginning
And death a destination
But life is a journey
A going -- a growing
From stage to stage
From childhood to maturity
And youth to age.
From innocence to awareness
And ignorance to knowing;
From foolishness to discretion
And then perhaps, to wisdom.
From Weakness to strength
Or strength to weakness
And, often, back again.
From health to sickness
And back we pray, to health again.
From offense to forgiveness,
From loneliness to love,
From joy to gratitude,
From pain to compassion,
And grief to understanding --
From fear to faith.
From defeat to defeat to defeat --
Until, looking backward or ahead,
We see that victory lies
Not as some high place along the way,
But in having made the journey, stage by stage.
A sacred pilgrimage.
Birth is a beginning
And death a destination.
But life is a journey,
A sacred pilgrimage --
Made stage by stage --
To life everlasting.

Rabbi Alvin Fine from *Jewish Reform high holiday prayer book, Gates of Repentance*

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- Robert Ingersoll, a great public speaker of the late 1800's, was asked to speak at the graveside of a friend's young daughter. He spoke briefly, and with the greatest words of comfort he could find. He said,

"Before the sublime mystery of life and spirit, the mystery of infinite space and endless time, we stand in reverent awe....

This much we know: we are at least one phase of the immortality of life.

The mighty stream of life flows on, and, in this mighty stream, we too flow on...not lost...but each eternally significant.

For this I feel: The spirit never betrays the person who trusts it. Physical life may be defeated but life goes on; character survives, goodness lives and love is immortal."

- Almost 3000 years ago, The Psalmist wrote a few lines of poetry that have endured through the ages. It is perhaps the best loved and most often repeated poem in the Western World. It is used most often at a time like this for our comfort and stability.

"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 fear no evil;

For thou art with me;

Thy rod and they staff, they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

Thou anointest 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." -Psalm 23

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This poem was read at the Memorial Service for W. Averell Harriman by Clark Clifford.

To Those I Love, by **Isla Paschal Richardson**:

- If I should ever leave you whom I love
To go along the Silent Way, grieve not,
Nor speak of me with tears, but laugh and talk
Of me as if I were beside you there.

And when you hear a song or see a bird
I loved, please do not let the thought of me
Be sad...For I am loving you just as
I always have...You were so good to me!

There are so many things I wanted still
To do--so many things to say to you...
Remember that I did not fear...It was
Just leaving you that was so hard to face...
We cannot see Beyond...But this I know:
I loved you so--'twas heaven here with you!

- If I should die and leave you here awhile,
Be not like others, sore undone, who keep
Long vigils by the silent dust, and weep:
For my sake turn again to life, and smile,
Nerving thy heart and trembling hand to do
Something to comfort weaker hearts than thine;
Complete these dear unfinished tasks of mine,
And I, perchance, may therein comfort you. **Mary lee Hall**

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- Do not stand on my grave and weep;
I am not there. I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow.
I am the diamond's glint on snow.
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.
I am the gentle autumn's rain.
When you awaken in the morning's hush,
I am the swift uplifting rush of quiet birds in circled flight.
I am the soft stars that shine at night.
Do not stand at my grave and cry;
I am not there. I did not die.
-author unknown

This is a prayer of sorts, from the American Indian tradition. It is spoken by the one who has died. It is entitled LIFE MUST GO ON... a Navaho Prayer

- Grieve for me, for I would grieve for you.
Then brush away the sorrow and the tears
Life is not over, but begins anew,
with courage you must greet the coming years.
To live forever in the past is wrong;
can only cause you misery and pain.
Dwell not on memories overlong,
with others you must share and care again.
Reach out and comfort those who comfort you;
recall the years, but only for a while.
Nurse not your loneliness; but live again.
Forget not. Remember with a smile.
- There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it.
-Edith Wharton

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- I lift up my eyes to the hills.
From whence does my help come?
My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.
He will not let your foot be moved,
He who keeps you will not slumber.
Behold, He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord is your keeper,
The Lord is your shade on your right hand.
The sun shall not smite you by day, nor the moon by night.
The Lord will keep you from all evil, He will keep your life.
The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in
From this time forth, and for evermore. **Psalm 21**
- The voice said, Cry," and I said, "What shall I cry?
All flesh is grass and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field.
The grass withers and the flower fades;
The wind passes over it and it is gone, and its place knows it no more.
But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting
upon those who fear him,
And his righteousness to children's children. **-Psalm 103 (adapted)**
- Let not your hearts be troubled;
You believe in God, Believe also in me.
In my father's house there are many mansions.
If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?
And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take
you unto myself, that where I am you may be also.
I will not leave you comfortless;
I will come to you. **-John 14:1-3**

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- When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste.
Then can I drown an eye, unused to flow,
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,
And weep afresh love's long since canceled woe,
And moan the expense of many a vanished sight.
Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,
And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er
The sad account of forebemoan'ed moan,
Which I new-pay as if not paid before.
But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
All losses are restored and sorrows end. -**Wm. Shakespeare**

- Crossing the Bar

Sunset and evening star, And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar, When I put out to sea,
But such a tide as moving seems asleep, Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep Turns again home.
Twilight and evening bell, And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness or farewell, When I embark;
For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face When I have crossed the bar.
-**Alfred, Lord Tennyson**

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Many Winters -

All my life is a dance.

When I was young and feeling the earth,
My steps were quick and easy.

The beat of the earth was so loud
That my drum was silent beside it.

All of my life rolled out from my feet
Like my land which had no end as far as I could see.
The rhythm of my life was pure and free.

As I grew older my feet kept dancing so hard
That I wore a spot in the earth.
At the same time I made a hole in the sky.
I danced to the sun and the rain and the moon lifted me up
So that I could dance to the stars.
My head touched the clouds sometimes
And my feet danced deep in the earth
So that I became the music I danced to everywhere
It was the music I dance to everywhere
It was the music of life.

Now my steps are slow and hard
And my body fails my spirit,
Yet my dance is still within me and
My song is the air I breathe.
My song insists that I keep dancing forever.
My song insists that I keep rhythm
With all of the earth and the sky.

My song insists that I will never die. by **Nancy Wood**

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- Remember Me:

To the living, I am gone.

To the sorrowful, I will never return.

To the angry, I was cheated,

But to the happy, I am at peace,

And to the faithful, I have never left.

I cannot be seen, but I can be heard.

So as you stand upon a shore, gazing at a beautiful sea - remember me.

As you look in awe at a mighty forest and its grand majesty - remember me.

As you look upon a flower and admire its simplicity - remember me.

Remember me in your heart, your thoughts, and your memories of the times we loved, the times we cried, the times we fought, the times we laughed.

For if you always think of me, I will have never gone. By-**Margaret Mead**

- James Whitcomb Riley wrote a short poem entitled "A Parting Guest," in which he describes a human being departing this life as if he were leaving a party with thanks and gratitude to his hosts:

What delightful hosts are they---

Life and Love!

Lingeringly I turn away,

This late hour, yet glad enough

They have not withheld from me

Their high hospitality.

So, with face lit with delight

And all gratitude, I stay

Yet to press their hands and say,

"Thanks. --So fine a time! Good night."

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- How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
Here will we sit and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears; soft stillness and the night
Become the touches of sweet harmony.
...Look how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patens of bright gold.
There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubims;
Such harmony is in immortal souls... **Wm. Shakespeare**
- **Loren Eiseley** wrote about the mysterious thread of life which holds us all together:

The Firmament of Time

Since the first human eye saw a leaf in primordial sandstone and a puzzled finger reached to touch it, sadness has lain over the heart of human beings. By this tenuous thread of living protoplasm, stretching backward into time, we are linked forever to lost beaches whose sands have long since hardened into stone.

The stars that caught our blind amphibian stare have shifted far or vanished in their courses, but still that naked glistening thread winds onward.

No one knows the secret of its beginning or its end. Its forms are phantoms. The thread alone is real; the thread is life.

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- A poem addressed from the one who has passed away, to their family:

Family o' mine:

I should like to send you a sunbeam, or the twinkle of some bright star,
or a tiny piece of the downy fleece that clings to a cloud afar.

I should like to send you the essence of a myriad sun-kissed flowers,
or the lilting song as it floats along, of a brook through fairy bowers.

I should like to send you the dew-drops that glisten at break of day,
and then at night the eerie light that mantles the Milky Way.

I should like to send you the power that nothing can overthrow -
the power to smile and laugh the while a-journeying through life you go.

But these are mere fanciful wishes; I'll send you a Godspeed instead,
and I'll clasp your hand - then you'll understand all the things I have left
unsaid.

- Victor Frankl once said

“We cannot judge a biography by its length, by the number of pages in it;
we must judge by the richness of the contents. Sometimes the
“unfinished” are among the most beautiful symphonies”

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- Eagle Poem

To pray you open your whole self
To sky, to earth, to sun, to moon;
To one whole voice that is you.
And know there is more
That you can't see, can't hear,
Can't know except in moments
Steadily growing, and in languages
That aren't always sound, but other
Circles of motion.

Like Eagle that Sunday morning
Over Salt River. Circled in blue sky,
In wind, swept our hearts clean
With sacred wings.

We see you, see ourselves and know
That we must take the utmost care
And kindness in all things.

Breathe in, knowing we are made of
All this, and breathe, knowing
We are truly blessed because we
Were born, and die soon within a
True circle of motion,

Like Eagle rounding out the morning
Inside us.

We pray that it will be done
In beauty.
In beauty.

-Joy Harjo, Creek Indian

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- A poem entitled "The Song of the River"

The snow melts on the mountain and the water runs down to the spring,
And the spring in a turbulent fountain, with a song of youth to sing,
Runs down to the riotous river, And the river flows to the sea,

And the water again Goes back in rain to the hills where it used to be.
And I wonder if life's deep mystery Isn't much like the rain and the snow
Returning through all eternity to places it used to know.
For life was born in the lofty heights and flows in a laughing stream,
To the river below Whose onward flow Ends in a peaceful dream.

And so, at last, when our life has passed and the river has run its course,
It again goes back O'er the selfsame track, to the mountain which was its
source.

So why clutch life, or why fear death, or dread what is to be?
The river ran Its allotted span Till it reached the silent sea.

Then the water harked back to the mountain-top
To begin its course once more. So we shall run The course begun
till we reach the silent shore.

Then revisit earth in a pure rebirth from the heart of the virgin snow.
So don't ask why we live or die, or whither, or when we go;
or struggle with the mysteries of life that only God may know.

By - **William R. Hearst**

- Oh Lord, support us all the day long, until the shadows lengthen, and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed and the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then, in thy mercy, grand us a safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last. Amen. **Book of Common Prayer**

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- God's Grandeur - Gerard Manley Hopkins

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness like the ooze of oil crushed.
Why do we then now not [heed] his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade, bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears our smudge and shares our smell:
The soil is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.
And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black west went,
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs--
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with, ah! bright wings!

- This is a prayer, from the American Indian tradition:

"O Great Spirit whose voice I hear in the winds and whose breath gives life to all the world, hear me. I am small and weak - I need your strength and wisdom. Let me walk in beauty and make my eyes ever behold the red and purple sunset. Make my hands respect the things you have made and my ears sharp to hear your voice. Make me wise so that I may understand the things you have taught my people. Let me learn the lessons you have hidden in every leaf and rock. I seek strength not to be greater than my brother, but to fight my greatest enemy, myself. Make me always ready to come to you with clean hands and straight eyes so when life fades as the fading sunset my spirit may come to you without shame.

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I would like to share with you a reading from David K. Reynolds' book entitled "Water Bears No Scars." The section is entitled "Realism."

"Anyone who has spent years working in a garden or in the fields knows impermanence intimately. We see the cycle of seasons, the coming and going of insects, droughts, freezes, rot, the seeds that sprout or die, the life cycles of plants, the bountiful harvests and the lean. It is all change. There is nothing that can be counted on with certainty to be exactly as it was last year. Our only recourse is to keep on fitting what we do, adapting who we are, to the constantly changing circumstances. It does no good to tell the grasshopper eating the soybean leaves, "You really shouldn't be doing that."

Wishing the rain would stop (or come) doesn't affect the weather or the plants. Analyzing how we feel about fungus doesn't save the cabbage. We need a more realistic perspective and straightforward action to have a chance to effect the changes we desire.

"I am not being passive or resigned when I emphasize the changeableness of the world and the necessity of our adapting to it. Only when we have a clear vision of this flux and our place in it does our effort mean something. To work and succeed and play and love while pretending it will all last, while ignoring the fragile "momentariness" of it all, is to miss the chance for depth in all these activities. To try while dying, to love while changing, to play while acknowledging the impermanence allows a kind of nobility to the simplest act, to something that was only childish escape before.

"There is nothing ennobling about suffering itself. But in striving while suffering we move beyond ourselves to become new creatures -- whether the striving attains what we set out to accomplish or not. Pain and self-doubt and fear and anger don't necessarily stimulate growth, but they do permit it. When the effort is there. Change is inevitable. In the garden; in us. Some of the change we can influence, some we cannot. Our fundamental hope lies in affecting the change that is us."

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- Popular funeral poem based on a short verse by David Harkins

You can shed tears that she is gone
or you can smile because she has lived.

You can close your eyes and pray that she'll come back
or you can open your eyes and see all she's left.

Your heart can be empty because you can't see her
or you can be full of the love you shared.

You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday
or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday.

You can remember her and only that she's gone
or you can cherish her memory and let it live on.

You can cry and close your mind, be empty and turn your back
or you can do what she'd want: smile, open your eyes, love and go on

- In the presence of death

we stand awkward, and ill at ease;
For death is a well-known stranger
whom we recognise, but do not wish to know;
But death is not a thing in itself,
but a stage in the journey of life,
through which all must pass.

It may come swiftly
and catch us unawares,
or slowly with leaden feet;
But death comes to all who live,
and in so doing heightens the understanding
of the one we know. By- **Rodney Murphy**

- Our love for you is not written on paper, for it can be erased.
Nor is our love for you etched in stone, for stone can be broken.
But our love for you is inscribed in our hearts, where it shall remain forever.

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- If I should go before the rest of you
Break not a flower, nor inscribe a stone
Nor when I'm gone speak in a Sunday voice
But be the usual selves that I have known
Weep if you must, parting is hell
But life goes on, so sing as well. By- **Joyce Grenfell**
- When I die and leave behind
This earth I love
These trees, this sky,
The pounding sea,
The yearly hope of spring,
Cry not for me,
Rejoice.
My soul has wings
And in its freedom sings. **FD**
- Where do people go to when they die?
Somewhere down below or in the sky?
'I can't be sure,' said Grandad, 'but it seems
They simply set up home inside our dreams.' By- **Jean Willis**
- If I can stop one heart from breaking,
I shall not live in vain:
If I can ease one life the aching,
Or cool one pain,
Or help one fainting robin
Unto his nest again,
I shall not live in vain. By-**Emily Dickinson**

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- Nothing Gold can Stay

Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay. By- **Robert Frost**

- The Day You Left

With tears we saw you suffer,
As we watched you fade away,
Our hearts were almost broken,
As you fought so hard to stay.
We knew you had to leave us,
But you never went alone,
For part of us went with you
The day you left your home. **Unknown**

Something Bright Remains

The tide recedes, but leaves behind
Bright seashells on the sand.
The sun goes down but gentle warmth
Still lingers on the land.
The music stops and yet it lingers on
In sweet refrain.
For every joy that passes
Something beautiful remains by- **Martha Vashti Pearson**

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- The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;
Then took the other, as just as fair
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that, the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,
And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.
I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference. By- **Robert Frost**

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- Funeral Blues

Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone,
Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone,
Silence the pianos and with muffled drum
Bring out the coffin, let the mourners come.

Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead
Scribbling on the sky the message He is Dead.
Put crepe bows round the white necks of the public doves,
Let the traffic policemen wear black cotton gloves.

He was my North, my South, my East and West,
My working week and my Sunday rest,
My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;
I thought that love would last forever: I was wrong.

The stars are not wanted now; put out every one,
Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun,
Pour away the ocean and sweep up the woods;
For nothing now can ever come to any good.

- On a Friend

An honest man here lies at rest,
As ever God with his image blest!
The friend of man, the friend of truth;
The friend of age, and guide of youth;
Few hearts like his, with virtue warm'd,
Few heads with knowledge so inform'd:
If there's another world, he lives in bliss,
If there is none, he made the best of this. By-**Robert Burns**

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- Remember me when I am gone away
gone far away into the silent land;
when you can no more hold me by the hand
nor I half turn to go, yet turning stay.
remember me when you no more day by day
tell me of our future that you planned:
only remember me; you understand
it will be too late then to counsel or to pray.
Yet if you should forget me for a while
and afterwards remember, do not grieve:
for if the darkness and corruption leave
a vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
better by far that you should forget and smile
than that you should remember and be sad. By- **Christina Rossetti**

“The price of a memory, is the memory of the sorrow it brings.” — Pittacus Lore

- **A Moment Remembered**

Confronted by conspicuous silence

Echoing of long remembered relationships

The soul disrupted flounders

Memories disturbing recollection trouble the gentle stillness

By-**George Hull**

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Speak to us of Death

Then Almitra spoke, saying, We would ask now of death.

And he said: You would know the secret of death.

But how shall you find it unless you seek it in the heart of life?

The owl whose night bound eyes are blind unto the day cannot unveil the mystery of light.

If you would indeed behold the spirit of death, open your heart wide unto the body of life.

For life and death are one, even as the river and the sea are one.

In the depth of your hopes and desires lies your silent knowledge of the beyond;

And like seeds dreaming beneath the snow your heart dreams of spring Trust the dreams for in them is hidden the gate to eternity.

Your fear of death is but the trembling of the shepherd when he stands before the king whose hand is to be laid upon him in honor.

Is the shepherd not joyful beneath his trembling, that he shall wear the mark of the king?

Yet is he not more mindful of his trembling?

For what is to die but to stand naked in the wind and to melt into the sun?

And what is to cease breathing but to free the breath from its restless tides, that it may rise and expand and seek God unencumbered?

Only when you drink from the river of silence shall you indeed sing. And when you have reached the mountain top, then you shall begin to climb.

And when the earth shall claim your limbs, then shall you truly dance.

By-Kahlil Gibran