

*NEWTOWN MONTHLY MEETING OF FRIENDS
A HANDBOOK FOR MEMORIAL SERVICES
May, 2000, November 2015 – revised*

This handbook has been developed to assist families of the meeting and committees of the meeting in dealing with the circumstances of a memorial service for worship. The objective of this document is to provide clarity on what persons, or committees within the meeting, are responsible for the elements involved with a memorial service. Procedures outlined should be followed as closely as possible.

Other items included (Planning Ahead, a checklist for families, Burial Grounds information, comments to open a memorial meeting) - are provided for guidance and may be used or not, depending upon individual circumstances.

Suggestions for additions or changes are welcome and should be directed to a member of the Worship and Ministry Committee of the Meeting.

ROLE OF COORDINATOR OF MEMORIAL SERVICES:

The Coordinator of Memorial Services is someone from the Worship & Ministry Committee who has been designated specifically to be the contact person and the one who oversees and coordinates the various activities described in this handbook.

Notification of the death of a member, attender, or other person involved with the life of the meeting should be given to the Coordinator as soon as possible. Where the family is unable to initiate this contact, a meeting member or other person is asked to make the Coordinator aware so that contact with the family can be initiated. A funeral director, if utilized, should also be encouraged to contact the Coordinator.

If the Coordinator is not available, contact should be made with the Clerk or any other member of Worship and Ministry, or the Clerk of the Meeting so that another coordinator can be named.

The Coordinator, working with the family, will undertake the following:

I – NOTIFY MEETING

1. Notify Clerk of Meeting and Clerk of Care & Counsel of the death. If asked, Care & Counsel may assume a helpful role in dealing with the family's bereavement.
2. Contact Building & Grounds Committee Clerk: In consultation with the family and the Clerk of Building & Grounds, coordinate scheduling a date (that is open on the Meeting calendar) for the memorial service if to be at Newtown Meetinghouse. Make sure it gets on calendar at meetinghouse and on website. Coordinate with facilities liaison at other facility if elsewhere (ie Pennswood, George School).

3. Write an announcement of the death to be read after the next Meeting for Worship and arrange with the editor of the Meeting newsletter to publish word of the death. This should be brief, succinct and include pertinent facts, including date and time of service.
4. Consider use of an e-blast, phone chain or make calls to other meeting members, as may be appropriate to provide timely notification, as well as to begin preparations for the memorial service.
5. Ensure that all support roles are filled (food, parking, childcare, cleanup...) Coordinator will introduce and end the memorial meeting for worship or designate someone to do so.

II - CONTACT FAMILY

1. Contact family directly. Provide sympathy and support. Review Service Arrangements. Decide what will be done by meeting and by family.
2. Assist family in making necessary contacts with funeral director, venue, caterer, buildings & grounds/burial grounds coordinator, etc.
3. Ask about the Death Notice and Obituary for newspapers. (This is provided by the funeral director and handled by the family.) It often includes the Memorial Service Date and Time.
4. If needed, assist the family with, or determine what arrangements are contemplated for, burial (see Burial Arrangements). Give the family the name and phone number of the Meeting's Burial Records Keeper so that they may make arrangements for interment. If cremation is taking place, inform the family of the Anna T. Jeanes Fund which will partially reimburse cremation costs for members of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.

III - BURIAL ARRANGEMENTS

In the event of a NMMF burial, the Burial Records Keeper should be contacted by the family. Ask if the family desires the interment to be a strictly family time, or if they would like the presence of Friends from the Worship and Ministry committee (or others). If the answer to the latter is "yes", ask if they desire silent worship, or would they like some spoken words of comfort.

1. He/she will help the family choose a burial site if one has not been previously purchased.
2. If a burial site has been purchased, he/she will work with the family to see that an urn is properly buried in the correct spot, or will mark the site of the plot should a casket burial be preferred.

3. The Records Keeper confirms the DATE and TIME of interment with the family; contacts and makes arrangements with the grave digger to have the site readied for the interment (if it is a casket burial, this is handled by the funeral director); and notifies the Building & Grounds Committee Clerk of this DATE & TIME to be posted at the Meeting, and possibly grounds keepers notified so that proper respect can be maintained at this often difficult but memorable time for family members.
4. The Burial Records Keeper, or someone else representing the Meeting, should be present at the burial of an urn and takes care of the final details after the family has left.
5. The Records Keeper will see that the family is given a copy of "Burial Grounds Regulation & Contributions" and will reinforce the desire of the Meeting that headstones be simple and in keeping with those surrounding as described in the Regulations. He/she will give the family the names of headstone vendors used by Meeting members and make sure the site is well marked so that the headstone can be properly installed.
6. He/she will accept the check from the estate of the deceased and provide the family of the deceased with a formal receipt. The check is then sent on to the Treasurer of the Meeting.

IV -- SERVICE ARRANGEMENTS

1. Contact family prior to service to ascertain/confirm:
 - a) seating - family(ies) may wish to be seated together. It is customary for family members to sit in the front row(s) and for members of Worship and Ministry and Friends designated by the family to sit on the facing benches; otherwise there is no designated seating.
 - b) flowers - who takes responsibility for delivery to meeting?
 - c) refreshments - who orders, prepares and cleans up (the committee offers a simple coffee & cookies reception, but there have been times when the family has arranged a potluck or a catered meal). Tablecloths? Who will serve as hosts?
 - d) music - if any. Sometimes, following the wishes of the deceased, quiet music is played prior to the start of the meeting. More frequently family and friends gather in silence.
 - e) guest book, if desired
 - f) is child care needed?

Newtown Meeting Memorial Service Handbook

- g) How many are expected to attend? This helps with seating, refreshments, parking and other decisions.
- h) Recording and amplification—does the family want to record the service and use microphones? Is this available at the location? Who will run it?
- i) Are ushers needed? Family or Meeting?
- j) Should there be handouts explaining a Quaker memorial service? Will there be a program provided by family?
- k) Is there a need for parking assistance? This can be helpful if many guests are expected, latecomers. Rides for those who don't drive?
- l) Will the family want display tables or boards?
- m) Clean up- who will clean up and take trash?
- n) Is there someone they request to lead the service? Will there be any prepared program elements?
- o) Other special requests

2. Determine within the Worship & Ministry Committee who will assume primary responsibility for the remaining preparations and conduct of the memorial service. Discuss with each member of this small group the sharing of responsibilities and arrangements for the memorial service (see Preparation of the Meetinghouse). Ushers, parking, kitchen, childcare, cleanup, AV.

3. Assumes any other helpful role in assisting the family.

4. Assures that ushers are instructed regarding course of a memorial meeting, seating of any navigationally challenged guests, and any family wishes regarding seating. One usher should be responsible for seeing that guests sign the guest book. (Sometimes an announcement to remind attenders to sign, is helpful.)

5. Tells the family that he/she (the Coordinator or other designated person of the Worship and Ministry Committee) begins the memorial meeting with a brief explanation of what a Friends memorial meeting is (see attached suggestions), and concludes the meeting with the traditional handshake.

6. Explains to the family that a memorial meeting typically lasts for 30 - 60 minutes, as appropriate to circumstances and to the sense of the meeting. Unexpected closures of meeting can be awkward for all concerned. Designate who will close meeting.

Newtown Meeting Memorial Service Handbook

7. Provides any necessary follow-up, or visit after the meeting, regarding memorial contributions, any cards received with flowers, etc.

V -- MEMORIAL MINUTE

Arrange for a meeting member who is familiar with the deceased (sometimes it is a family member) to write a memorial minute to be read into the minutes of Monthly Meeting for Business. (Saving the Obituary or other articles can be helpful guides.)

VI- PREPARATION OF THE MEETING HOUSE

Prior to the Day of the Service:

1. Arrange for refreshments (if served), including supplies in the kitchen
2. Arrange for persons to assist with parking
3. Arrange for ushers
4. Arrange for child care, if needed
5. Arrange additional parking if needed
6. Make sure there are supplies of tissues, paper goods (if used)

Day of Service:

1. If weather is cold, turn heat up one hour before (instructions on thermostat)
2. Unlock and open doors (key wrench hanging in east closet)
3. Ready refreshments
4. Place Meeting House Sign (west closet) on corner of State & Court Streets, if many visitors are expected
5. Place "Friends Memorial Service" pamphlets and tissues out on the benches
6. Place flowers in center of facing benches or where family designates
7. Set up extra chairs in balcony, if needed
8. Make sure bathrooms supplied with paper towels and toilet tissue
9. Place guest book for attendees' signatures on special table, set out boxes of tissue
10. Set up tables for family memorabilia
11. Set up audio-visual (recording, playing, amplifying)

12. Place ushers at south and east doors or as needed

13. Following service, clean-up, put away, heat down (touch "Run-Program"), bring sign indoors if it was used, lights out, lock doors, remove trash

In Case of Snow or Severely Inclement Weather:

1. Contact family to determine if arrangements need to be postponed

2. Contact Building & Grounds Clerk to confirm snow has been removed

3. Arrive early to remove snow on porches and apply salt (in heater room) as needed

APPENDIX I: Comments to Open a Memorial Meeting for Worship--Samples

The Religious Society of Friends holds, as the basis of its faith, the belief that God endows every human being with a measure of the Divine Spirit.

Our manner of worship is an outgrowth of this belief. We gather in quiet assemblies, mindful of the words: "Be still, and know that I am God"

A Friends memorial service is similar in many ways to a Meeting for Worship. We come together in reverent silence, with the desire to draw nearer to God, and to understand God's will. It is a time not only for a sharing of loss, but also a time of thankfulness for the life of the person for whom the memorial service is held. We reflect on the value of that life as it relates to the lives of all of us.

All present share equally in this service. We sit quietly; at times an individual may be moved to speak, to offer prayer or a message that has come out of the silence. All are welcome to do this. The meeting is closed with handshakes.

The responsibility for the spiritual depth of the meeting rests with each attender. Those who keep silence, as well as those who give a vocal message, do their part when they yield their minds and hearts to the guidance of the spirit.

Friends hope that in the Meeting for Worship a consciousness of the Divine Presence will come to every attender, to be a source of direction and of strength after leaving the meeting.

From Wooster (Ohio) Monthly Meeting

-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0

We are gathered today in a memorial meeting for worship in appreciation and gratitude for the life of _____. A memorial meeting is a meeting for quiet worship

Newtown Meeting Memorial Service Handbook

during which spoken memory of the deceased is given by a number of those present as they are moved to do so. We come together in reverent silence, with the desire to draw nearer to God, and to understand God's will. This is a time not only for sharing of loss, but also a time of thankfulness for _____'s life. All present share equally in this service and are welcome, when moved to speak, to offer a prayer or message that has come out of the silence. The meeting will end with handshakes.

Newtown Meeting Memorial Service Handbook

-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0..

Friends, we are gathered today to give honor and glory to God and our thanks for the gift of the life of _____, a life which has touched us all in a special way.

Our faith is one in which the very character of death is transformed, replacing a sense of loss by a sense of liberated life, an entrance into the fuller light of God.

It is the custom of Friends to worship in silence, quietly awaiting the presence of God. Out of this expectant silence, any who feel moved by the holy spirit to speak about the goodness of God and God and the appreciation of the life of _____ may do so.

It is also customary to keep a few minutes silence between spoken messages so that we may fully appreciate each thought offered. The conclusion of the service will be indicated by my shaking hands with the person next to me.

Let us now continue our worship.

0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0

Good afternoon friends.

We are gathered here at this time to celebrate the life of _____. We have each known him/her at some point in her life and we are here today to share those memories, be they serious or funny, shared or singular, to remind ourselves of the many aspects of a long, well-lived life.

My name is _____. The others on the facing bench and I are members of the Newtown Meeting Worship and Ministry Committee, responsible for conducting this memorial meeting for worship. For those of you unfamiliar with Friends' practices, a few words of explanation may be helpful. A memorial meeting for worship, like our regular worship services, business meeting, committee meetings, weddings and other special gatherings, are based in worship.

In worship, we gather together in silence and open ourselves to the presence of God among us, seeking Gods will and guidance. In a Quaker meeting, all who are present are considered to be ministers, and therefore are welcome to contribute vocal ministry. After a period of gathering silence, anyone who wishes to share a memory of Helen should feel free to do so. We ask that you stand if possible, keep your ministry brief, speak loudly and clearly, and allow a suitable period of time after the last speaker has finished before you speak so we may consider what has been shared.

We recognize that there is always an appropriate time for grief and mourning when someone close to us has died. But it is our sense that there should also be a time to share memories to show how we have been changed by having shared that life. I expect that after this meeting, each of you will have a different and more complete picture of _____'s life than you have now, and that we will all feel enriched by his/her example.

The service will continue until I have a sense that our memories have been shared. I will end the meeting with a shaking of hands. I invite you to shake hands and greet your neighbors as the family retires to the Gathering room. You are invited to join them there for refreshments.

I have known (give personal reflection).....

APPENDIX II: Planning Guide for Families

1. The name and phone number of the person responsible for the memorial service at Newtown Monthly Meeting of Friends is _____
2. Is the Coordinator acquainted with the funeral director (if utilized)?
3. Will you be placing an obituary in the newspapers? Which ones?
4. Do you intend burial or cremation? The Anna T. Jeanes Fund will partially reimburse cremation costs for members of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Do you need information on local headstone businesses?
5. Where are the remains to be located? Have you been in contact with the burial ground records keeper? Contact information: _____
6. Do you wish to have memorial contributions specifically directed?
7. Do you wish to receive calls/flowers at home? What kind of support do you need? Is there anyone in the family who would like a visit after the service?
8. Have you reviewed arrangements for the memorial service with the coordinator?
 - a) seating - family(ies) may wish to be seated together. It is customary for family members to sit in the front row(s) and for members of Worship and Ministry and Friends designated by the family to sit on the facing benches; otherwise there is no designated seating.
 - b) flowers - who takes responsibility for delivery to meeting?
 - c) refreshments - who orders, prepares and cleans up (the committee offers a simple coffee & cookies reception, but there have been times when the family has arranged a potluck or a catered meal). Tablecloths? Who will serve as hosts?
 - d) music - if any. Sometimes, following the wishes of the deceased, quiet music is played prior to the start of the meeting. More frequently family and friends gather in silence.
 - e) guest book, if desired
 - f) is child care needed?

Newtown Meeting Memorial Service Handbook

- g) How many are expected to attend? This helps with seating, refreshments, parking and other decisions.
- h) Recording and amplification—does the family want to record the service and use microphones? Is this available at the location? Who will run it?
- i) Are ushers needed? Family or Meeting?
- j) Should there be handouts explaining a Quaker memorial service? Will there be a program provided by family?
- k) Is there a need for parking assistance? This can be helpful if many guests are expected, latecomers. Rides for those who don't drive?
- l) Will the family want memorabilia display tables or boards?
- m) Clean up- who will clean up and take trash?
- n) Is there someone they request to lead the service? Will there be any prepared program elements?
- o) Other special requests

APPENDIX III: PLANNING AHEAD

Friends are urged to provide, in their wills or in other written statements, guidance to prevent difficult decisions regarding one's own memorial service having to be made by others in times of emotional stress. These instructions should include directions as to place of burial and arrangements for the disposal of the body. In Pennsylvania, after twenty-four hours, a body must be buried in a local cemetery without embalming, or held under refrigeration or in a hermetically-sealed casket for a short period prior to burial; embalmed and buried; cremated without embalming; embalmed and cremated; willed to an institution for the promotion of anatomical science.

Hospice teams, funeral directors and the Funeral Consumers Alliance can all provide useful information regarding options at the time of death.

Cremation

The Anna T. Jeanes Fund will partially reimburse cremation costs for members of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. All members of Newtown Monthly Meeting are members of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. For information, contact the Yearly Meeting office.

APPENDIX IV: Burial Grounds Regulations & Contributions

1. A gravesite shall consist of a plot of ground not exceeding 3 1/2 feet by 10 feet. An urn gravesite, suitable for the burial of urns only, shall consist of a plot of ground not exceeding 3 1/2 feet by 4 feet.
2. A lot shall consist of four contiguous gravesites except in the unrestricted lots in the old section where the size of lots permits only three gravesites.
3. There shall be no more than one casket interment per gravesite, but a single gravesite may contain up to six urns. All caskets must be enclosed in a concrete vault. The cost of hiring a backhoe to bury a casket shall be the responsibility of the estate/family of the deceased. Urn gravesites may contain two urns. At least one foot of earth must cover each container.
4. The following contribution shall apply until altered by Monthly Meeting:

Members of Newtown Monthly Meeting shall be asked to contribute:

\$400/grave beginning 7/1/94

\$300/urn site beginning 7/1/94

Spouses, Friends, and long-term (5 years or more) attenders will pay twice the Meeting member rate. However, members purchasing gravesites for

themselves and their spouses will not be asked to contribute the higher amount. Costs for urn sites includes burial of urn.

Contributions will be used for perpetual care of the graveyard.

5. Payment in full is to be made to the Newtown Monthly Meeting Treasurer at the time of the reservation of a lot or grave except in the event that interment is to be made immediately upon reservation; then the contribution may be temporarily deferred, to be paid by the estate/family of the deceased.

6. Upright headstones for graves shall be simple in form and shall not exceed 18" in width, 8" in thickness, and 16" in height above the mean level of the ground, and shall be set on a base approved by the Building & Grounds Committee. A headstone carrying two names shall not exceed 24" in width, 8" in thickness and 16" in height. The graveyard is divided into three sections. Markers in Section I and Section II should conform to those surrounding. In Section III all markers are to be set flush with the ground and should measure not more than 18" wide by 24" long and be not less than 6" thick.

If several urns are used in one grave in Sections I and II, it is suggested that two names appear on the upright stone and any additional names be inscribed on a flat stone to be laid over the grave and set flush with the ground.

7. A burial permit obtained from the undertaker is required by the Building & Grounds Committee.

8. Trees, shrubs and flowers are not permitted to be planted on lots. Shrubs now on lots will be removed if and when they become unsightly. Flowers in containers will be removed after a reasonable length of time. No flower pots are to be sunk into the ground. No plastic flowers, wreaths or other artificial decorations are to be placed on graves. The American Legion places flags on the graves of those Friends who chose to participate in armed conflict. These flags are removed when they become faded, but the holders remain for future use.

9. The Building & Grounds Committee and/or the Clerk of Worship and Ministry shall have authority to waive all or any portion of the aforesaid regulations at their discretion.

10/1/95

**Newtown Monthly Meeting of Friends
219 Court Street
Newtown, Pennsylvania 18940**

Date:

This *is* to certify that _____ has contributed to the Treasurer of Newtown Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends the sum of \$_____ for Lot No.____ in Section ___ as shown on the official plan of the Burial Grounds of said Meeting in the Borough of Newtown, Bucks County, in the State of Pennsylvania, to be held by heirs or assigns as a place of interment only, transferable only by the consent in writing by the Buildings and Grounds Committee of said Meeting and on the books of the Meeting, and subject to such rules and regulations as Newtown Monthly Meeting of Friends or the Buildings and Grounds Committee may from time to time establish for the care of said lots or graves.

Furthermore, this contribution shall entitle the assignee or assignee's heirs the right to use grave(s) for burials for a period of thirty (30) years at which time option to continue assignment may be renewed in writing for an additional thirty (30) years. At the conclusion of each thirty year period the Treasurer shall contact assignee at last known address by certified mail, return receipt requested. If the assignee wishes to continue the assignment he/she will be permitted to do so. If the assignee no longer has any need for plot-grave(s) assigned him/her such plots/graves will revert to the Building and Grounds Committee for reassignment without recourse.

Signed

Trustee in charge of the Burial Grounds of
Newtown Monthly Meeting of Friends

Rules and regulations pertaining to the Burial Grounds of Newtown Monthly Meeting of Friends, Newtown, Pennsylvania are a part of this agreement.

Newtown Meeting Memorial Service Handbook

Memorial Service Responsibility Delineation:

1. COORDINATOR — oversees the service and all arrangements: contacts & seats the family; opens and closes the worship service
2. USHERS — in charge of the Meeting Room: makes sure it is neat (clutter removed, etc.), distribute the Memorial Service pamphlets and tissues, set up the table for guest book and memorabilia, arranges placement of flowers if there are any; stationed at the doors to welcome people and help assist any to their seats if needed; Note the possible need for assistance and childcare and tells the family of the availability.
3. REFRESHMENTS – requests volunteers to make light refreshments, ensures adequate quantities; or coordinates with caterer; checks tablecloths, arranges for table placement, bouquet of flowers (if possible). Drinks: checks for and purchases supplies (hot and cold cups, napkins, apple or other juice, coffee, tea, cream & sugar); places juice in refrigerator the evening before (or brings cold to meeting); arrives early enough to allow time to make the coffee; checks for thermos and pitchers for serving.
5. PARKING - asks someone to help if expect a great deal of cars. Calls Stockburger's if service is on a Saturday.
6. OPENING & CLOSING - is in charge of opening all the doors, turning on and off heat (if needed), and closing all doors — making sure lights are all out.
7. AV- handle playing music, recording, amplifying
8. OTHER W&M MEMBERS should also sit on facing benches.
9. CHILDCARE Someone willing to take children upstairs if needed.