

Celebration of Life, Memorial Service and Reception Planning Guide

Coastal Virginia Unitarian Universalists
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Our congregation, the Coastal Virginia Unitarian Universalists, mission is, in part, to provide a nurturing community. When a member, friend or family member dies it is traditional to hold some sort of commemoration of their life. In some traditions, this is a funeral mass, with a wake, in some it is called a memorial service, last rites or a blessing of their journey with a reception or repast following the service.

Unitarian Universalists may use all these names and more, but we tend to use the phrase "Celebration of Life" because that is what we usually do. It is a time of community, prayer and sharing, centered on the full life of our relative, friend and loved one. A Celebration of Life is different from a funeral in that the casket or ashes may not be present. We recognize that the person we celebrate still lives through our memories and in our hearts. While some services happen within a week of death, it is often more practical to schedule a Celebration several weeks or even a month after a death.

Our building can seat approximately 180 people in the main hall, or sanctuary, which has wooden pews. Our celebrations are usually scheduled for about 60-90 minutes. Our sanctuary is air conditioned. Here in Virginia, the word "repast" is sometimes used for a reception with food following the formal celebration. You may schedule a reception/repast in our social hall, which fits about 120 people comfortably. Some families invite guests to a repast at another hall or at their home. Sometimes there is a brief event following a service which is more like a reception line held in the social hall. This may have coffee and water. The family gathers later, privately.

To help with the planning of a Celebration of Life and reception, our minister and Caring Team have compiled this planning guide. We hope it will assist you as you make decisions and consider possibilities as we help you plan the Celebration. We include lists of funeral homes and those providing cremations at the end. These are not as recommendations, just places members have used in the past. We also include caterers and prices for additional services.

Planning a Celebration of Life

Our Unitarian Universalist faith calls us to honor the inherent worth and dignity of every person. At the start of our worship services we often say “we are real people, broken and mended” and we work to affirm these words. Each Unitarian Universalist Celebration of Life is designed to reflect the values, beliefs, and aesthetics of the deceased and of the bereaved.

The presiding minister will meet with your family days or weeks before the service to plan the celebration of life and learn about you, the deceased, and others who might be attending. This meeting is often in person, surrounded by photo albums or other mementos, and may last 1-2 hours.

We know that human relationships can be complicated. In this document we speak of the deceased as a “loved one” so as to include family members (and step-family members), partners, friends, professional partners or to honor whatever relationship existed. Some relationships have lasted a lifetime, some are recent. Some were full of expressed love, and others were, at best “complicated.” Perhaps even the phrase “loved one” is not appropriate for some celebrations. A celebration of life is best when it celebrates the whole life. Our faith calls us to approach the celebration in the spirit of love.

Our minister may ask questions like:

Did your loved one express any wishes for their funeral/memorial service/celebration?

What tone are you seeking for the service?

Are there differing religious traditions that might be acknowledged? (including rituals, prayers, hymns, or Bible passages?)

Would you like the eulogy to be written by the minister or by a family member?

Who will deliver it?

What was your loved one like as a person?

What are some of your favorite memories?

What gender pronouns did the deceased prefer, and what name were they called?

Our primary objective in designing and leading a service is to minister to the bereaved, the family and friends who survive. We want to create a time for you to remember your loved one, to connect you with supportive community, to acknowledge that your grief.

Service Planning

The minister (alone or with an assistant) coordinates and presides over the service. Please consult with her or him before inviting speakers, musicians, or singers. If the deceased had a large family and/or a large network of friends and colleagues that wish to participate in the service, it is especially important that promises of participation not be made until you have discussed the content and length of the service with the minister - changes and modifications are needed as the service is developed.

A typical Celebration of Life Service includes:

- Prelude
- Welcome
- Chalice Lighting (a Unitarian Universalist tradition)
- Hymn or Musical Interlude
- The Life of... (Or "Remembering...")
- Reflections (Eulogies and Readings)
- Musical Interlude/Solo Prayer/Ritual (candle lighting, etc.)
- Remembrances (memories from those assembled)
- Hymn or Musical Interlude
- Closing Words & Postlude

A typical Graveside Service includes:

- Welcome
- Readings
- Prayer
- Committal (of Remains)
- Benediction

Graveside services must be arranged with the assistance of funeral homes as well as a minister.

Practical Matters

(Use this form to collect your thoughts prior to meeting with the Minister or Bereavement team member. If you don't know an answer, leave it blank.)

Date of the Service:

Estimated Time of Service:

Minister Officiating:

Location of Service:

809 S. Military Highway, Virginia Beach, VA 23464-1823

Other: _____

Location of Reception / Repast:

Social Hall

Other: _____

Notes:

For congregation members, a Pastoral Care team member will be at the service to help with any family needs before, during and after the service at the reception.

For a reception in the social hall, the family needs to arrange for set up and cleaning of the social hall.

Coastal Virginia Unitarian Universalists Memorial Service Planning Guide

Memorial service costs

Costs	Active Members of our Congregation and their children	Friends of our Congregation and others associated with CVUU
Building Use for Celebration of Life	No charge	Consult Office
Minister's services	No charge	\$315
Reception	No charge for standard reception	Consult current rental policy
Order of service preparation	Simple order of service no charge. Many families wish to include photographs and other extras and take responsibility for printing costs.	Order of service established with minister; printing provided by family/friends.

Organist or pianist: Price negotiated

Soloist: \$150 approximately depending on music

Sexton: \$35 per hour

Florist: Family responsible for the cost. (Note: Consult Office for Florists used by Church recently)

Guest Book: Family responsible for this. We can supply a music stand for the guest book.

Food and beverages: Caterers -- Family responsible for the cost (See attached list of caterers.)

Funeral Homes

Sometimes funeral homes will presume that the family wants a wake the day before a Celebration of Life. This is your choice, and not a common part of Unitarian Universalist traditions. Sometimes local tradition overrules religious considerations, and a funeral home wake can provide time for community members to “pay their respects.”

Similarly, burial or interment is often a family-only affair, sometimes months or years after death. Our minister is available for these events with proper planning. No particular preference is given to any business.

- Cremation & Funeral Services of Tidewater
3345 Croft St, Norfolk, VA 23513
(757) 855-0885
<http://www.candfservices.com/>
- Cremation Society of Virginia (Tidewater and Peninsula)
5265 Providence Road, Suite 104, VA Beach, VA 23464
757-474-9409 (Tidewater) 757-643-8945 (Peninsula)
<https://www.vacremationsociety.com/>
- Graham Funeral Home
1112 Kempsville Road, Chesapeake, VA 23320
(757)382-7747
<http://www.grahamfuneralhome.com/>
- Graves Funeral Home
1631 Church Street, Norfolk, VA 23504
757-622-1085
<http://gravesfuneralhomeinc.com/>
- H.D. Oliver Funeral Apartments (various locations in Norfolk, VA Beach and Chesapeake)
757-622-7353
<http://www.hdoliver.com/>
- Holloman Brown Funeral Home (various locations in Norfolk, VA Beach and Chesapeake)
757-583-0177
<http://www.hollomon-brown.com/>
- Metropolitan Funeral Home (locations in Norfolk and Portsmouth)
757-628-1000
<http://www.metropolitanservice.com/>

Those who would like to understand the costs of a funeral or cremation may want to visit
www.smarfuneralsva.com

Caterers

We do not endorse caterers, but members have either used or sampled the wares of these businesses, and we have determined that they would cater a reception at our facility.

- Michael Toepper
Mrtoepper@gmail.com
- Artemis Stoll
feta2@verizon.net
- Gourmet Gang (various Tidewater locations)
Main office; 6000 Robinhood Road, Norfolk, VA 23518
757-857-6100 ext. 1
<https://www.gourmetgang.com/>
- Grand Affairs, 2036 Pleasure House Road, VA Beach, VA 23455
757-460-9786
<http://www.grandaffairscatering.com/>
- Y not Italian (various Tidewater locations)
757-624-9111 (Norfolk)
<http://www.ynotitalian.com/ynot-catering/>
- Taste (various Tidewater locations)
757-623-7770
<https://www.taste.online/catering>
- Ross Fetterly and Susan Snyder Stevens
(910) 599-0546

We hope this guide is helpful to you. If you use it and find a section confusing, please tell us so that others are not confused. You may e-mail these comments to caringteam@c-vuu.org