

SAMPLE WORDING FOR MEMORIAL PROGRAMS

A Quaker Inspired Silence and Spoken Reflections

For Friends, a Memorial Meeting for Worship on the occasion of death is a time to celebrate in the Light the life of an individual whose spirit has been released to God.

At times the Spirit may prompt you to speak in Meeting. Friends customarily do not plan in advance to speak at a meeting for worship; neither do they plan to remain silent. In discerning whether to speak, Friends often ask: Does this message come through me having arisen from the Spirit that connects us all? Wait patiently to know that the sense and the time are right. When you are sure, have confidence that the words will be given to you.

Listen to the ministry with an open spirit. After a message has been given, allow time to ponder its meaning and to let the Meeting return to silent worship. In speech and in silence, each person contributes to the Meeting.

Today's Memorial Meeting for Worship

(Name) will welcome attenders and convene the gathering. [A short biography of (the deceased) will be read and then we will settle into worship.]

[Worship will close with singing “name of hymn.”] (Name) will conclude the service.

Worship After the Manner of Friends

For Friends (Quakers), a Memorial Meeting for Worship, an extended period of silence or “opening worship,” is a time of prayer, of thanksgiving, and remembering. At times an individual may be moved to speak, to offer a prayer or a message that has come out of this silence. Most of the messages will, no doubt, relate to our memories of (the deceased) and our celebration of his (her) life. Neither laughter nor tears are out of place. Any message that springs from our effort to connect with the Divine, and which is delivered in a worshipful manner, is appropriate. Reflections, poetry, scripture, singing, and stories may all be part of the fabric of memory we weave together. All present are free to speak, but all messages should be brief. Please stand and speak loudly and clearly so you may be heard by all. Please leave ample pauses between speakers so that we may contemplate fully the import and meaning of your message.

At the appropriate time, (name) will signal the conclusion of the celebration by shaking hands with those around him (her), and will make a few closing remarks.

Celebration of Life After the Manner of Friends

We will sit together at first in silence, feeling each other's presence and opening ourselves to whatever wishes to express itself through us. When you feel it is time, you are welcome to speak, equally welcome to share silently what is in your heart. After one person speaks, please allow a little space for the words and message to reverberate before another person speaks.

At the appropriate time, (name) will signal the conclusion of the Celebration by shaking hands with those around him (her), and will make a few closing remarks.

Today's Memorial Meeting for Worship

(Name) will welcome attendees and convene the Meeting for Worship. [A family member will speak briefly, and] then we will settle into worship.

For Friends (Quakers), a Memorial Meeting for Worship on the occasion of death is a time to celebrate in the Light the life of an individual whose spirit has been released to God.

At times the Spirit may prompt you to speak in Meeting. Friends customarily do not plan in advance to speak at a Meeting for Worship; neither do they plan to remain silent. In discerning whether to speak, Friends often ask: Does this message come through me having arisen from the Spirit that connects us all? Wait patiently to know that the sense and the time are right. When you are sure, have confidence that the words will be given to you.

Listen to the ministry with an open spirit. After a message has been given, allow time to ponder its meaning and to let the Meeting return to silent worship. In speech and in silence, each person contributed to the Meeting. If you have unexpressed thoughts, please remember you can share them later in notes and deeds.

(Name) will conclude the service when the time is right by shaking hands with those around him (her).

Memorial Meeting for Worship

The purpose of this Memorial Meeting is to celebrate in the Light, while the life of (name of deceased), whose spirit has been released from us, is recognized and remembered. It is a time to draw those who feel the absence of (deceased) into the comfort and care of the loving Spirit of God, which is accessible to us all. It is an occasion when temporary things are secondary, when the reality of immortal life is deeply felt, and when the presence of the Lord brings hope, comfort, and consolation to those present.

As in all Quaker Meetings for Worship, this memorial service reflects true simplicity, where we seek to come together in reverent silence, opening ourselves to the movements of the Divine within us. The responsibility for the spiritual depth of the meeting rests with every person in attendance.

Those who keep the silence, as well as those who are led to give a vocal message, do their part when they yield their minds and hearts to the guidance of the Spirit.

Anyone who feels so led may rise in place to speak to the meeting. Speaking loudly and clearly, share with us some facet of (deceased's) life that has touched your life, or give some words of comfort to those who are left behind, leaving some space and silence between messages for reflection. The Meeting for Worship will come to a close when there is a signal to shake hands with your neighbors.

[Following this Memorial Meeting there will be an opportunity to personally greet and support family members and friends. A guestbook will be available for people to sign.]

NOTE: Often the programs include a biography of the deceased. This may be specifically prepared for the memorial program or may be the obituary. This biography is an opportunity to celebrate the special accomplishments of the deceased. Many who attend the Memorial Meeting for Worship may not be fully aware of these accomplishments.