

Memorial Service
February 18, 2012
Unitarian Church of Lincoln

I. Prelude

II. Welcome & Chalice Lighting

A human life is sacred.
It is sacred in its being born.
It is sacred in its living.
And it is sacred in its dying.

It is with this sacredness in mind, we light our chalice today in honor of the sacred human life of _____.

When a person dies, family and friends gather for many reasons. Life has touched them with deep grief and they need one another's company for their own comfort. Just to be together, to look in friends' faces and see the common expression of hurt takes away the loneliness of their feelings and draws their hearts together in blessed healing.

At such a time the various faiths which sustain us separately come together in harmony which acts across all creeds and assures us of the permanence of goodness, the inspiration of dedication, the value of a serviceable human life.

We are gathered here this afternoon by death, the end of a person's life – the life of _____. Though we will mourn, for mourn we must, let this also be a time for remembering the person she was and let this be a time for affirming the kind of life she lived. Let this, then, be not so much a time for contemplating her death, but time for celebrating a human life, the life that was _____'s life.

How true are the words of Kahlil Gibran who wrote:

When you are sorrowful look again in your heart,
And you shall see that in truth
You are weeping for that which has been your delight.

By our presence here this afternoon we pay tribute to the memory of one who was an important part of our lives, who was dear to us; to show our love and respect for the person she was. And we have come together to show our love and support for _____'s family:_____ Their loss of _____ is sharp and deep, we know.

And so we have come together.
It is right and fitting that we have come together.
For a human life is sacred.
And so is its ending.

It is my hope and heart's desire that we will be granted the coping and healing gifts of strength, courage, and wisdom: the strength to endure the passion of so sudden and so great a loss; the courage to speak openly to the loss; and the wisdom to give thanksgiving for a life that touched and filled our lives.

We know and accept, as best we can, the fact that death must and will come inevitable, to each and everyone. Death, we know, has several faces. When death comes to the aged or ill, it is often seen as an end to suffering. It is even welcome, and then our grief is quiet sadness for a long life lived through to its final unfolding. However, when death comes as it has now to one in the fullness of life, we will, as Dylan Thomas describes, "rage, rage, against the dying of the light." This death is not easy to accept, for we not only measure the greatness of our loss, but we think of what might have been for Shirley, and for us, had not death come like a thief in the night.

Our clouds of grief are hammered by disturbing and perhaps conflicting emotions. There is anger, for we do not easily give up our beloved. There is frustrating fantasy – if only this, or if only that. There might be guilt, too, and we punish ourselves for things left unsaid, or acts of courage and trust omitted. These emotions or their like, may swell and sweep over us. Do not deny them. Accept them. Try to understand them, for they contain secrets to Life's meaning.

So in the face of this enormous death we affirm life: the goodness to be found in living and loving; the goodness to be realized in and through another life like our own – a life that grief presses strongly upon our thoughts and feelings just now.

Now let us pause for a musical meditation to gather your own understanding of this occasion and reflect upon the evidence of _____'s presence and love in your life. Pause and think of _____ as you know her. Think of that story, image or phrase that brings _____'s presence alive for you. Later in this service we will have a time for you to stand and share those gifts with one another.

III. Interlude

IV. Remembrances

Blessed are those who remember. Blessed also are those who take in and honor the memories of others. Somewhere in each of our memories is some story, image, or phrase, which _____'s spirit has given life. Each of our memories are unique to us, because we are each unique individuals. The sacredness of a human life becomes amazing in how it can ignite such a variety of responses to those it touches. We now move into a time to honor and celebrate the memories of _____'s life. The power of these memories will become a comfort in the days to come.

Eulogy

First, let us hear from _____

Second, let us hear from _____

Now, let us listen for other voices, if you would like to use a microphone feel free, if not please stand and speak out so others can hear you...

Open sharing

V. Meditation/Prayer

_____ believed in a God, not a God defined by conventional wisdom, but a personal God. One that gathered each of us into its presence and surrounded us with love. This God of Love was exhibited through _____ to all who knew her. It is to this God we pray:

God of Love,
We come to you with sorrow in our hearts,
We ask you surround us with your presence.
God, we, especially ask you be with _____'s
family:_____.

Remind us to reach out to them with our love in the days, months, and
years to come.

Help us to find comfort and peace in your love and the love we received
from _____.

Amen

I invite you into a time of silent meditation to offer your own prayer or reflect
on the memories offered here. Amen.

VI. Special Music

_____ had a specific request for this time we had to be together and it
comes in the form of a song. She wanted her family and friends to know
how much she cherished them in her life. And so, she asked for Josh
Groban's "You Raise Me Up" to be played. While it plays, photos from
Shirley's life will be displayed.

VII Closing

We give thanks for the life of _____. We remember her for the
woman she was, though we can only know a portion of her world. She lives
on through all she touched – the common life of which we are all a part.
She lives on, especially through those whose lives were intertwined with
her life.

I offer these words from Merritt Malloy:

When I die,
Give what's left of me away
To Children,
And old men that wait to die.
And if you need to cry,
Cry for your brother,
Walking the street beside you.
And when you need me
Put your arms around anyone
And give them
What you need to give me.
I want to leave you with something.
Something better than words
Or sounds.
Look for me
In the people you've known
Or loved,
And if you cannot give me away
At least let me live on your eyes
And not your mind
You can love me most by letting
Hands touch hands
By letting
Bodies touch bodies
And by letting go of children
That need to be free.
Love doesn't die,
People do.
So, when all that is left of me
Is Love,
Give me away.

All things must pass, and just as _____ life has come to an end, we also come to the end of this service of memory and hope.
I will now extinguish the chalice which we earlier lit in her memory, and as I do so, I invite you to look closely.
As the flame is extinguished, a puff of smoke will rise up, flow through this room and out into the world, to be carried forth by the eternal winds.

So it is with _____'s spirit.

The flame of her life may be extinguished, but her spirit remains with us still.

Amen.

Go now in peace.