

FUNERAL
AND MEMORIAL SERVICE
ARRANGEMENTS:



A GUIDE

The Elysian Society



*Death is our friend precisely because it
brings us into absolute and passionate
presence with all that is here, all that is
natural, all that is love.*

Rainer Maria Rilke



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ROLE OF THE ELYSIAN SOCIETY

The Elysian Society, a non-profit organization, was founded in 1999 to meet the following needs:

- To make the Fellowship Cemetery a beautiful place for presence through conscientious maintenance and continuous improvements
- To plan and present thoughtful and moving funeral and memorial services for Fellowship members and their families
- To educate and enlighten the community regarding the responsibility we each have in preparing for death

The Elysian Society works closely with Fellowship ministers to plan and facilitate funeral and memorial services for Fellowship members. We strive to make the services memorable, moving, and beautiful, reflecting the essence of the friend we are remembering, and providing an experience of scale and presence for those attending.

Students from around the world can be given memorial services or funerals at Apollo, whether or not ashes are buried at the Cemetery.

Preparing and presenting a service requires the dedicated help of many volunteers. Immediately after a student dies, Elysian Society members meet with the family and friends to begin the planning process, choose poetry and music, select a eulogist and craft the eulogy. We also confirm invited guests, seat requests, and shuttle drivers for the event.



When the date is chosen, more volunteers join the effort. Members connect the sound system, arrange flowers and create the wreaths, clean the Festival Hall and set up the chairs and lectern, iron the lectern cloths, rake the Cemetery paths and prepare the gravesite, perform the music, direct the shuttle cars and toll the bells.

This harmonious dance is a gift of love to a departed friend, and every student in the Fellowship receives the same level of effort.



PLANNING THE SERVICE

There are many aspects to planning a funeral or memorial service.

Funerals And Memorial Services

A funeral is a service held at the Apollo Festival Hall and/or the Fellowship Cemetery when interment (burial) will occur. Burial occurs at the Fellowship Cemetery.

A memorial service does not include a burial but may include a scattering of ashes.

The service may be held at the Apollo Festival Hall or the Fellowship Cemetery. The service includes opening and closing remarks by a minister, a musical selection, the reading of a poem or two, and a eulogy. A toast completes the ceremony.

The choice of location depends partly on the number of those wishing to attend. For a large group, the Festival Hall is most suitable. For a small ceremony, the Cemetery can work well.

Burial after a funeral may be done privately, if preferred by the family.

Note that private ceremonies (for invited guests only) are not sponsored by the Elysian Society. If a family wishes a private ceremony, the Elysian Society will simply ensure the Cemetery is prepared for the burial and will open the Cemetery gate for the funeral party.

* Elysian Society guidelines regarding choices of music, eulogy content, and poetry are based on standards set by the Fellowship of Friends for funerals and memorial services.



Minister and Eulogist Roles

A student may choose whom they would like for the minister and the eulogist. The Elysian Society maintains a list of ministers who are trained to conduct services.

The minister begins the service with opening remarks, and closes the service at the end, following music, reading(s), and the eulogy.

The eulogist is typically a close friend or family member who is in the Fellowship. The eulogist drafts notes for inclusion in the service, working with guidelines provided by the Elysian Society. Eulogies in general are not to exceed three pages (15 minutes) in length. The eulogist is encouraged to avoid an excessive number of anecdotes from their own experience of the deceased. The aim of the eulogy is to invite whoever attends to participate in the height, and breadth, and depth of the student's soul.

The Elysian Society collaborates on the drafting of the eulogy, finalizes the eulogy and minister's notes for the service, and provides copies to those speaking at the service. The Elysian Society also conducts a rehearsal the day before the service in most cases.

Music and Flower Choices

Musical options include a vocal selection or instrumental music, such as a movement from a classical work, performed on piano, flute, cello, or another instrument.

Flowers for the service include a formal bouquet for the altar, flowers at the Cemetery and flower petals, if burial at the Cemetery follows. Flower choices can be specified, both type and color, and are arranged by staff provided by the Society.



ALTERNATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

Scattering the Ashes

The family may choose to scatter some or all the ashes at the Fellowship Cemetery or at another location. If the ashes are to be scattered at the Fellowship Cemetery, this can be performed as part of the service or done privately.

TIMING

To organize a service, the Elysian Society requires about two weeks following the death in order to plan for staff to support the event. During this week, the death certificate is signed and placed on file with the funeral home. Following this, cremation or a coffin burial can occur, as applicable.

Services are scheduled on Saturdays, to allow for the maximum number of guests to attend and to ensure the availability of Elysian Society staff.

HEADSTONES AND PLAQUES

If burial occurs at the Fellowship Cemetery, a headstone may be designed and ordered. Alternatively, a plaque commemorating the student's life may be placed on one of the granite pillars in the Cemetery. Headstones have the name of the student, dates of birth and death (years or full dates), and optionally, a short poetic phrase or quotation and a small design (such as a bird or a butterfly).



A NOTE ON THE FELLOWSHIP CEMETERY

The Cemetery maintained by the Elysian Society is on land owned by the Fellowship of Friends. This land has been legally deeded by the State of California for use as a cemetery in perpetuity, meaning that the Cemetery's land cannot be changed to other uses.

Anyone who is a member of the Fellowship at the time of death may be buried in the Cemetery. Minor children (under age 21) of Fellowship members may also be interred in the Cemetery.

COSTS

While the Elysian Society maintains the Fellowship Cemetery through long-term donations and fundraising, costs associated with services, burials, and memorials are the responsibility of members and their families.

Costs for a service include flowers, music, memorial cards, burial site preparation, cremation, and urns, as applicable. Approximate costs are shown on the Elysian Society website:

<https://www.elysiansociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/2023-Cremation-Burial-Costs.pdf>

<https://www.elysiansociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/2023-Memorial-Plaque-Costs.pdf>

Please note that Elysian Society board members, who serve as key staff for most services, provide their time at no charge.



FURTHER RESOURCES

Examples of Past Services

You can find examples of past services here or at

<https://www.elysiansociety.org/in-memory/>.
[Further resources for Planning](#)

For more on end of life and funeral planning, see the End of Life Planning/Personal Arrangement Guide from the Circle of Friends, available here:

<https://www.elysiansociety.org/end-of-life-planning/>.

DONATIONS

To accomplish its work, the Elysian Society relies on donations. Please support us by making a tax-deductible gift today. Consider leaving a bequest to the Elysian Society in your will or trust to help us continue our work into the future. A donation of any amount—small or large—is always gratefully received.

QUESTIONS

The Elysian Society is here to help and to answer any questions.

Contact us at info@elysiansociety.org.

You are also welcome to contact Rachel or Deborah to make a donation, arrange for a tour of the Cemetery, volunteer your assistance, purchase end-of-life planning documents, or learn more about the Elysian Society.

Immortality is revelation.

Walt Whitman



*“The best of me then,
when no longer visible—
for towards that
I have been incessantly preparing.”*

Walt Whitman



The Elysian Society

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