

We Remember

Oak Hill Middle School

Newton, MA

April 27 at 6 pm

The memory of a good person is a blessing.

Proverbs 10:7

We Remember

Far too many years have passed -- an eternity and the blink of an eye, both at the same time.

As we have done each year since the tragedy of April 27, 2001, we gather once again to remember Steve, Kayla, Melissa, and Greg by coming together in community. In addition to the loss of these four precious children, we gather to remember others who have left us far too soon. All these lives have enriched our own. All these souls matter. All their memories live on in our hearts, in our words, and in our deeds.

Our annual "Circle of Remembrance" is an example of how community can be so sustaining. We are all grateful for one another's presence, patience, support and love.

One way to honor the legacies of lost loved ones is by saying their names aloud. Another way is to tell stories and to share memories with others. In the spirit of a Quaker-style meeting, each of us can feel free to speak, sing, read aloud or even remain silent. The most important thing is that we are gathered together.

If you wish, please say aloud the names of those whose memories you keep with you. If you prefer, you can remain silent, remembering in quiet reverence the names of loved ones who have passed on.

May the memories of all those we miss be a blessing. And may we find comfort from one another as we gather.

The following pages contain selected readings on loss, on hope, and on living our lives to the fullest, even without the physical presence of people we love and miss so much.

If you wish to keep this booklet for yourself or to share with others, please feel free to take it with you.

Selected readings

Grief

Grief is universal.

At the same time it

Is extremely personal.

Heal in your own way.

Rabbi Earl Grollman, Living When a Loved One Has Died

Say not in grief 'he is no more,' but live in thankfulness that he was.

Hebrew proverb

Grief is the price we pay for love.

Source unknown

A gift for such a little while,

your loss just seems so wrong.

You should not have left before us,

it's with loved ones you belong.

Source unknown

Prayer and Spirituality

To pray is to dream in league with God.

Abraham Joshua Heschel

Spirituality is the intentional decision to search for a deeper meaning in life and to actualize in one's life the highest values that can be humanly obtained.

David Hall, from "The Spiritual Revitalization of the Legal Profession"

If we can say that grace is a sense of connectedness, that it is the experience of our underlying nature, then we may see how what is often called tragedy holds the seeds of grace. We see that what brings us to grace is not always pleasant, though it seems always to take us to something essential in ourselves.

Stephen Levine, Who Dies?

Healing and Hope

Don't turn your head.
Keep looking at the bandaged place.
That's where the Light enters you.

Rumi (Mowlana Jalaluddin Rumi) 1207-1273

The only way to honor the person you lost is to find your happiness again,
and to carry the person with you.

Gretchen Pyne (mother of Lulu, who perished at age 4 in an accident)

What the caterpillar perceives as the end, to the butterfly is just the
beginning.

Source unknown

A symbol of Hope.
A butterfly lights beside us like a sunbeam
and for a brief moment its glory and beauty belong to our world.
But then it flies again.
And though we wish it could have stayed,
we feel lucky to have seen it.

Source unknown

Healing is not about cure. It is about soothing the heart and soul... On the other side of healing we emerge with newly found strength, perhaps uniquely different from the person who began the journey. Each of us confronts our ordeal as the individuals we are and with the tools we have brought with us. Yet, to truly close our wounds, we often need the help of others. At these times, we learn that the smallest gestures can have the most profound meaning. The gentlest touch can have the strongest effect. Our strength can multiply when we are able to draw on the strength of those around us. We are truly strongest when we not only reach within, but also reach outward to our community, and upward to seek spiritual meaning and peace.

Source unknown (possibly Kushner)

You are not lost. You continue in every hearty laugh, in every nice surprise,
and in every reassuring moment of my life.

Molly Fumia

The Rose Still Grows Beyond the Wall

Near a shady wall a rose once grew,
Budded and blossomed in God's free light,
Watered and fed by morning dew,
Shedding its sweetness day and night.

As it grew and blossomed fair and tall,
Slowly rising to loftier height,
It came to a crevice in the wall,
Through which there shone a beam of light.

Onward it crept with added strength,
With never a thought of fear or pride,
It followed the light through the crevice's length,
And unfolded itself on the other side.

The light, the dew, the broadening view,
Were found the same way as they were before,
And it lost itself in beauties new,
Breathing its fragrance more and more.

Shall claim of death cause us to grieve,
And make our courage faint or fall?
Nay! Let us faith and hope receive:
The rose still grows beyond the wall.

Scattering its fragrance far and wide,
Just as it did in days of yore,
Just as it did on the other side,
Just as it will forevermore.

A.L. Fink

Silence

Let us be silent that we may hear the whisper of God.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Remembrance

At the rising sun and at its going down we remember them.

At the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter we remember them.

At the opening of the buds and in the rebirth of spring we remember them.

At the blueness of the skies and in the warmth of summer we remember them.

At the rustling of the leaves and in the beauty of the autumn we remember them.

At the beginning of the year and when it ends we remember them.

As long as we live, they too will live, for they are now a part of us, and we remember them.

When we are weary and in need of strength we remember them.

When we are lost and sick at heart we remember them.

When we have decisions that are difficult to make we remember them.

When we have joy we crave to share we remember them.

When we have achievements that are based on theirs we remember them.

For as long as we live, they too will live,

For they are now a part of us, as we remember them.

Jewish prayer

To live a few more days is understandable, but just a blink in time. To live on in the hearts of the people you know is much more, and to live on in the hearts of people you've never met is the definition of forever.

Larry Brown (from an editorial about Eli Segal by his son Jonathan – Boston Globe 2/23/06)

Don't weep at my grave,

for I am not there.

I've a date with a

butterfly to dance in the air.

I'll be singing in the

sunshine, wild and free.

Playing tag with the wind,

while I am waiting for thee.

Source unknown

*The following is part of a sermon delivered by **Henry Scott Holland** in May 1910, when Holland was the Canon of St Paul's Cathedral in London. The sermon was delivered at St Paul's, at the time the body of King Edward VII was lying in state at Westminster.*

Death is nothing at all.
It does not count.
I have only slipped away into the next room.
Nothing has happened.

Everything remains exactly as it was.
I am I, and you are you,
And the old life that we lived so fondly together is untouched, unchanged.
Whatever we were to each other, that we are still.

Call me by the old familiar name.
Speak of me in the easy way which you always used.
Put no difference into your tone.
Wear no forced air of solemnity or sorrow.

Laugh as we always laughed at the little jokes that we enjoyed together.
Play, smile, think of me, pray for me.
Let my name be ever the household word that it always was.
Let it be spoken without an effort, without the ghost of a shadow upon it.

Life means all that it ever meant.
It is the same as it ever was.
There is absolute and unbroken continuity.
What is this death but a negligible accident?

Why should I be out of mind because I am out of sight?
I am but waiting for you, for an interval,
Somewhere very near, just around the corner.
All is well.

Nothing is hurt; nothing is lost.
One brief moment and all will be as it was before.
How we shall laugh at the trouble of parting
When we meet again!

The Dash by Linda Ellis

I read of a man who stood to speak
At the funeral of a friend.
He referred to the dates on her tombstone
From the beginning... to the end.

He smiled when reciting her date of birth.
And spoke the next date with tears,
But he said what mattered most of all
Was the dash between those years.

For that dash represents all the time
That she spent alive on earth...
And now only those who loved her
Know what that little line is worth.

For it matters not, how much we own;
The cars...the house...the cash,
What matters is how we live and love
And how we spend our dash.

So think about this long and hard...
Are there things you'd like to change?
For you never know how much time is left,
That can still be rearranged.

If we could just slow down enough
To consider what's true and real,
And always try to understand
The way other people feel.

And be less quick to anger,
And show appreciation more
And love the people in our lives
Like we've never loved before.

If we treat each other with respect,
And more often wear a smile...
Remembering that this special dash
Might only last a little while.

So, when your eulogy's being read
With your life's actions to rehash...
Would you be proud of the things they say
About how you lived your dash?

There are stars whose light reaches the earth only after they themselves have disintegrated and are no more.

And there are people whose scintillating memory lights the world after they have passed from it.

These lights which shine in the darkest night are those that illuminate for us the path.

Hannah Szenes 1921-1944

Do not stand at my grave and weep;
I am not there, I do not sleep.

I am a thousand winds that blow.
I am the diamond glints on snow.
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.
I am the gentle autumn rain.

When you awaken in the morning's hush
I am the swift uplifting rush
of quiet birds in circled flight.
I am the soft stars that shine at night.

Do not stand at my grave and cry.
I am not there; I did not die.

Mary Frye

When you were born, you cried and the world rejoiced.

Live your life in a manner that when you die, the world cries and you rejoice

Native American Proverb

Love

Death leaves a heartache
no one can heal;
Love leaves a memory
no one can steal.

Irish Tombstone

The best and most beautiful
Things in the world cannot
Be seen or even touched.
They must be felt with the heart.

Helen Keller

Those we love don't go away,
They walk beside us every day,
Unseen, unheard, but always near,
Still loved, still missed and very dear.

Source unknown

If I should go tomorrow
It would never be goodbye,
For I have left my heart with you,
So don't you ever cry.
The love that's deep within me,
Shall reach you from the stars,
You'll feel it from the heavens,
And it will heal the scars.

Source unknown

You can shed tears that he is gone,
Or you can smile because he lived,
You can close your eyes and pray that he will come back,
Or you can open your eyes and see all that he has left.

Your heart can be empty because you can't see him
Or you can be full of the love that you shared,
You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday,
Or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday.

You can remember him and only that he is gone
Or you can cherish his memory and let it live on,
You can cry and close your mind be empty and turn your
back,
Or you can do what he would want: smile, open your eyes,
love and go on.

Source unknown

What we have once enjoyed we can never lose
All that we love deeply becomes a part of us.

Helen Keller

Do not judge a song by its duration
Nor by the number of its notes

Judge it by the richness of its contents
Sometimes those unfinished are among the most poignant...

Do not judge a song by its duration
Nor by the number of its notes

Judge it by the way it touches and lifts the soul
Sometimes those unfinished are among the most beautiful...

And when something has enriched your life
And when it's melody lingers on in your heart.

Is it unfinished?
Or is it endless?

Author Unknown

Community

There's an ancient folk tale about an old man who knows he is nearing the end of his life. He calls his children to him and gives them each a sturdy stick.

"Break the stick," he instructs them.

And they each snap their sticks in half.

"This is what happens when you stand alone," he explains.

Then he gives each of them another stick and says, "This is how you should live. Put your sticks together in a bundle, and try to break the bundle in half."

None of them can break the sticks when they are gathered together.

"We are strong when we stand together," the old man tells his children.

"When we are with one another, we cannot be broken."

Source unknown