

MEMORIAL SERVICES

A Guide for Alaka'i of Huna International

From time to time an Alakai may be asked to lead or participate in a memorial service. Following are some suggestions.

Leading A Service

A basic format, which can be expanded or changed as desired, is:

1. The opening blessing. Two standard Hawaiian openings are:
 - a) Aumakua/E Akua Nui - Aloha - Mahalo. E ho'omaika'i i keia wahi, ame i keia po'e manu (Higher Self/God in heaven, we send you love and give you thanks; bless this place and all these people/spirits gathered here).
 - b) Auhea! E na aumakua/E ke Akua Nui, e na akua, e na kanaka, auhea! (Listen up! Oh you aumakua/Oh God in Heaven, all the spirits, all the people, listen up!)
2. State the purpose of the gathering.
3. Share a story of memory of the subject of the service if you have one.
4. Invite others to share.
5. Allow some time for silent prayer or thoughts.
6. If a table or site has already been set up for people to place objects of their affection, such as photos or gifts, then bless the objects. If not, then have them do that now and bless them.
 - a) A simple blessing of the objects, with hand or hands raised over them: E ho'omaika'i i na mea o ke aloha (bless these objects of affection), and may [name of deceased] be aware of our love.
7. Have everyone sing "Aloha 'Oe."

NOTE: If the service is being held outside it is common for everyone to gather in a circle.

Participating In a Service

This is usually when you are asked to say a prayer, or when you are one of the other participants are sharing something from your heart with a Hawaiian flavor. This is usually most appreciated when it is short.

1. If you can play a nose flute, this can be done by itself or as part of a prayer or blessing.
2. Here is a short prayer used in the past at the end of a funeral which comes from "Hawaiian Customs and Beliefs Relating to Sickness and Death," by Laura C. Green and Martha W. Beckwith, American Anthropologist. The English translation is by Serge Kahili King.

Aloha na hale o maua i makamaka 'ole!
Ka alanui hele mauka o Huliwale.
E huli au ana au i makana ia 'oe, a-a-a!
Aloha wale, e [inoa], kaula, a-a-a!

Have compassion for those who can no longer share with a friend!
The great road of Change leads inward.
I want to give you a gift, alas!
There is always love between us, O [name], alas!

Another possibility is to do the chant "E Moemoea." Although originally intended as a sunset chant, it also serves well as a memorial chant. The chanting style is the same as "E Ala E."

E MOEMOEA

E moemoea - (Dream a good dream)
Ka la i ke komohana - (The sun is in the west)
I ka moana - (toward the ocean)
Ka moana hohonu - (The deep ocean)
Hele iho i ke kai - (Descending into the sea)
Ke kai pahiwa - (The sacred sea)
I ke komohana - (In the west)
Aia ka la - (There is the sun)
E moemoea - (Dream a good dream)

A Sample Memorial Statement

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Throughout the ages philosophers, scientists, theologians, and anyone who has paused to think about the whys and wherefores of things, have wondered about the experience and meaning of life and death. There is no agreement on the subject, but on this occasion it may be useful to look at it from a Huna point of view.

First of all, life and death exist as experiences. Whatever we think about them is based either on what someone has taught us or on our own conclusions. No matter what life and death may actually be, our beliefs about them will govern our thoughts and actions in relation to them.

Secondly, Huna assumes that existence is infinite, and that life and death and time and space are just names for different types of experiences. It has been said that we are as dead now as we ever will be, and therefore we are also as alive now as we ever will be. One root translation of the Hawaiian word for death, *make*, calls it "a desire to move in a different direction."

Thirdly, a belief is simply a way of organizing our experience. If we change our beliefs about life and death then our experience of them changes as well. When someone we care about passes away, we can keep our thoughts on the presence that is no longer there, or we can shift our attention to the good memories that remain.

Next is the idea that all experience is happening now. Time itself is merely a belief. To people of the past, we are as yet unborn; to those of the future, we have already died. The one we miss is invisible to us, but still present, nevertheless.

In addition, life and death are part of the impulse toward fulfillment that we call love. Love changes the lover and the beloved, and without change there is no existence. Our relationship to one who has gone from our sight has changed, but the relationship is still as strong as our love makes it be.

Huna also implies that the power of life and death comes from within. Not from within the personality nor from within the body, but from the infinite, spiritual source that exists within

each of us. “Outside” factors may influence the timing and manner of life and death, but they do not cause the experience. As a Hawaiian proverb says, *Aia kinaina I Kahiki* – “The ending of a life comes from the Inner World.”

Finally, regardless of what anyone says about life and death, what really matters to us is what we think and feel as individuals. We have the right to choose any set of ideas or beliefs about life and death that make sense to us, and which help us to deal with those experiences. And so I close with these thoughts of Kahil Gibran:

“If you would indeed behold the spirit of death,
open your heart wide unto the body of life.
For life and death are one, even as the river and the sea are one.

Only when you drink from the river of silence shall you indeed sing;
and when you have reached the mountain top, then you shall begin to climb.
And when the earth shall claim your limbs, then shall you truly dance.”