



# **Buddhist Church of Ogden**

## **Funeral and Memorial Service Guidelines**

*These guidelines have been compiled to serve as a helpful guideline in the event of a death in the family It is a general outline and the procedures may vary with the wishes of the family.*

*June 2023*

# Funeral and Memorial Service Guidelines

## Funerals

Understanding death is necessary to understand life. As Rennyō states in his Letter on White Ashes, "The fragile nature of human life underlies both the young and old." When death comes to a family member or someone near to you, it is often a time of confusion.

When your family goes through this experience, the temple leadership and members are available to assist you during this most difficult time. Please feel free to contact Rev. Hirano and the temple leaders to guide you through the basic steps to make the necessary arrangements.

The first thing to do is call the mortuary. If you are at a hospital or nursing home, the facility will call for you. Mortuaries have personnel available 24 hours a day.

After contacting the mortuary, then contact Rev. Hirano to arrange for the **makuragyo service**. This service traditionally is conducted directly following the death at the home, hospital or place where the person has died. Literally translated, the term means "pillow service" and is to help begin the grieving process. The makuragyo service is not to make sure your loved one goes to the Pure Land. The makuragyo service is for the living family members. The death of a loved one is a very traumatic event. The makuragyo is a time to settle your mind that all will be fine and that you must now ready yourselves for the upcoming funeral services and time for mourning. Usually the closest family members attend, so if the death occurs early in the morning, the arrangements can be made to hold the service at the mortuary to allow all those who want to attend to be present.

At the makuragyo service, Rev. Hirano will chant a sutra and the family will burn incense. Rev. Hirano will then give a brief Dharma talk. If the temple president has not been contacted, the family should then notify the president of the death and make arrangements to meet with the temple funeral committee to plan the date, place and time for the funeral and possible viewing. A typical funeral service will consist of the makuragyo, funeral service, burial and Shonanoka (seventh day service) followed by *otoki* (meal with family and friends). The funeral committee of temple members will assist you in selecting appropriate individuals to help with the funeral.

Most funerals consist of the following;

Minister

Chairperson

Organist/Pianist

6-8 pallbearers

Honorary pallbearers (*optional*)

1-2 persons to give personal history or eulogy

Representatives from organizations (OBC, BWA, YBA, Dharma School) for incense offering (*optional*)

2-3 receptionists (Koden)

\*The church has an Excel template available for collecting Koden information for your laptop.

3-4 ushers

1-2 people to hand out programs and oversee the guest book

2-3 people to record the floral donations

A family member or representative to express the family's appreciation to those who helped with the funeral and those in attendance.

Those helping with the service are usually family/friends, but the chair should be familiar with

the Buddhist funeral. If the family prefers, Rev. Hirano and the funeral committee will select individuals who are familiar with the various roles.

In Utah, it is common for the family to hold a viewing. This is not a Buddhist tradition. However, it is usually held the evening prior to and/or an hour before the actual funeral. If the viewing is held the evening before, it is usually not religious in nature. However, an Obutsudan can be set up on request. It is usually helpful to have the receptionists at the viewing, since many people will still bring koden.

### **Necessary Elements for the Funeral**

The temple has a silk altar arrangement available. The option of fresh flowers may be provided by the family.

In the case of cremation, the family may choose to provide a framed photo for the altar.

### **Some Common Funeral Expenses**

Casket or urn

Plot for burial or niche and headstone

Certified copies of death certificate

Funeral director's fee

Flowers (casket, and other floral pieces)

Thank you cards (often provided by the mortuary)

Obituary notices

Memorial donations to temple and various organizations

It is common courtesy to acknowledge all the acts of kindness, words of sympathy and personal services received during bereavement and the funeral. The manner for recognizing the family's gratitude is a personal preference, but normally a gift card or small gift is given. The minister receives a monetary gift of appreciation or orei. The orei is an expression of gratitude and traditionally is a personal gift from the heart. However, the amount is often a struggle for the family, so the following guidelines are given as suggestions.

Funerals: \$250 - \$500

Memorial Services: \$100-300

Organizations: (BWA, Dharma School, YBA) \$25-\$100

As a guide, please acknowledge the following:

Temple (monetary)

Minister (monetary)

Organist/Pianist (monetary)

Organizations, if applicable (monetary)

Funeral personnel, i.e. ushers, receptionists, flowers, etc. (monetary or gift)

Floral pieces, koden, sympathy cards and letters (thank you card)

Personal gestures, i.e., food and drink supplied, etc. (thank you card)

## Memorial Services “Hoji” (Dharma Affair)

Memorial services or “**Hoji**” as they are often called, has a long history in Buddhism. Family and close friends gather at the Temple or home in memory of the deceased member of the family. Following the service, the group will usually share a meal together either at the place of the service or at a restaurant. This meal is important in that it renews each member in both mind and body and strengthens the ties that bind the group together. This custom and the memorial services help to emphasize that death is a natural occurrence in life and is not something to be feared. The memorial service is also a wonderful opportunity to reinforce family ties beyond one’s immediate family, helping to create a sense of continuity and community from generation to generation.

The first memorial service to be held is actually the **Shonanoka** or seventh day service. This service is usually held immediately after the burial or cremation. It is the first time the family gathers together after the physical body of the loved one is no longer among them. It is the time to turn to one another for support and listen to the Dharma for strength and guidance. If there will be a Shonanoka after the burial, the family should bring a framed photo of the deceased to place on the altar.

**Chuin** refers to the first 49 day period of mourning after death. In the past it was often marked with services held every seven days. In some sects of Buddhism, the karmic energy of a person is believed to be in a state of flux, moving to a new state of existence every seven days. This state of flux was called the shadowy world of yin. Thus the name *Chuin* meaning - in the middle of yin. After the 49<sup>th</sup> day the energy was said to be reborn. This belief was widespread in China and Japan. This understanding was often propagated from our Issei to the preceding generations.

However, Jodo Shinshu categorically denies the efficacy of such observances but nevertheless observes *Chuin* in grateful memory of the deceased and as yet another opportunity to listen to the Dharma. The memorial service in Jodo Shinshu is not for the sake of the dead. In holding the service in memory of the deceased, we acknowledge our ties to the various causes and conditions in our life, which allow us to exist. Therefore, the date of the memorial service does not necessarily have to be exactly on the date of death or before the date of death. The need to hold these services before the date of death is merely a result of the superstitions brought over with the Issei. The memorial service should be held whenever it is convenient for the family and friends to gather.

The timing of memorial services is based on the Japanese way of counting rather than the system used in the United States or Western world. Therefore, the memorial service is held on the anniversary of the first year of death and is called **isshu-ki** (first memorial cycle, rather than first year service as we commonly refer to it). The next service is the third cycle, being the second year after death. The day the memorial services should be held can be determined as follows:

First Week (7<sup>th</sup> day)  
Seventh Week (49<sup>th</sup> day)  
Hundredth day  
1<sup>st</sup> Year  
3<sup>rd</sup> Year  
7<sup>th</sup> Year  
13<sup>th</sup> Year  
17<sup>th</sup> Year  
25<sup>th</sup> Year  
33<sup>rd</sup> Year  
50<sup>th</sup> year

Following burial or cremation  
About a month and half to two months after death  
(Rarely observed in America)  
One year from date of death  
Two years from date of death  
Six years  
Twelve years  
Sixteen years  
Twenty-four years  
Thirty-two years  
Forty-nine years

Please contact Rev. Hirano to make arrangements for these memorial services.