

A Program Honoring Our Departed Brethren And Their Widows



Original Author unknown

Revised / Edited by

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For the success of this program it is important that a number of items are adhered to:

- 1) The most important is to invite the widows, most importantly recent widows, of our membership to this program. The program is most successful when combined with a dinner served by the officers with a dessert and conversation occurring after the program is completed in the Lodge room. Personalized invitations and phone calls to each widow is highly recommended. Remember that this a program for the Widows.
- 2) The principal officers must rehearse this program to ensure that the program can be delivered in a respectable manner to bring honor to the Fraternity and provide a meaningful program to show our respect to the Widows.
- 3) Ensure that a short biography is written for every member who passed during the current year (or members who passed in previous years if a widow is at the program for the first time). Do not limit to when a Brother was initiated, passed and raised, try to find out one specific special thing that can be told. This will make the evening more meaningful to those widows how are attending for the first time. Remember that this night is about the Widows of our deceased Brothers.
- 4) When the program has ended, have dessert in the dining area and officers should personally escort each widow. Closing the lodge must be done, but ensuring the widows are properly attended to is even more important.

Equipment needed:

- +Chair
- +Slippers
- +Reading glasses
- +2 pedestals or other available table for the vases
- +One vase with roses for every Widow / Spouse in attendance
- +One vase with roses for each departed Brother
- +Table
- +Lamp
- +CD player or a Brother playing a piano
- +Robe
- +Bible

Note: if pedestals are not available the Sr Deacon and Sr Warden can carry the vases with the roses.

Dress Code:

This is an important night for our Widows, it is suggested that dark suits (tuxes) be worn by the members. *At a minimum, members should have shirt and ties.*

Music:

There is a need for music in the beginning as guests are being brought into the lodge room and again as they are being escorted out. The choice of music at the beginning should be allow for those present to be able to self-reflect / meditate. Instrumental music is preferred. The music at the end should be more jubilant and happy. There are a number of classical pieces on CD's (Brother Mozart) that can be purchased by the Lodge and used year after year.

STAGE: Chair, robe, slippers, table, lamp, bible (reading glasses) set off center before the altar in its usual place, draped in black. [As front and center as possible without obstructing the altar.] A vase of flowers set upon a pedestal just aft and to stage left of the altar [with enough flowers to represent each departed brother]. Place an additional vase of flowers (Roses) upon a pedestal along with the Widow Pins, just fore and stage right of the altar. [Leave a symmetrical balance between them with enough room to walk around.] The flowers (Acacia?) aft, represent the Brothers, the flowers before the altar represent the Widows. A podium should be placed from which the Secretary can read the names of the departed Brothers. **See Figure 1.**

DIRECTION: *Each Widow to be honored will be identified by name, the Senior Deacon will ensure their names and where seated is recorded and relayed to the Master. The Widows should be seated as close to the front as feasible.*

SCENE: Prior to entrance of our honored guests, the lodge is solemnly lit except for a singular scene of a solitary chair. Upon the chair, a robe appears casually draped, a pair of slippers, neatly set, upon the floor. A solitary reading lamp is at first lit, illuminating the small table. Upon the table there is only a bible, laid as though just read – the entire scene reminiscent of someone in repose, having just read before retiring; left as artifacts are the book of faith, robe, slippers, lamp and chair.

SOUND: Soft music playing in the Lodge Room; selection should be meditative and instrumental.

ENTRANCE: As music is playing in Lodge Room, all Lodge Officers are in tuxedo, each escorting an honored guest to the seats set for them. Widows should be escorted individually, family may follow. [There is no lining up, or specific ceremonial entrance] Once the honored guests are seated, Officers should move to the main floor before their positions and look toward the scene, pause in reflection.

DIRECTION: *As they look unto the scene, the reading lamp becomes extinguished [the scene still illuminated from above], taking their cue from the Master, they shall move to their chairs, to be seated after another brief pause, sitting as the Master seats himself.*

[In the absence of a remote method to dim the light, one of the other Officers will simply turn it off before assuming their station.]

SOUND: As all guests and Officers are seated, music still plays for a brief moment before fading out.

DIRECTION: *Master gives pause after the music ends, reinforcing the meditative mood.*

MASTER: Brothers, Ladies, Friends and Guests; please stand and join me in the pledge to our flag. [Done]

Please be seated.

I offer for reflection the following words from *Ecclesiastes, Chapter 3*:

“To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven. A time to be born and a time... to die... a time to plant and a time to pluck that which is planted; a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance.”

This evening is the time to remember those Brothers who have been called to the Celestial Lodge above and to honor their loved ones. Let us pray.

CHAPLIN: With reverence and affection we remember before you, everlasting God, all our departed Brothers and in doing so honor the loved ones who remain. Keep us in union with them through faith and love, that hereafter we may enjoin with them in that which brought us together and shall reunite us all in glory. Amen. [The Chaplin may select an appropriate prayer they feel matches the theme.]

RESPONSE: So mote it be!

MASTER: In memory of Brothers departed; this peaceful scene... at once a solemn reminder of the absence of a brother, not long from our midst, is symbolic in many ways of his Masonic life.

SENIOR WARDEN: [one second pause] ...The chair... a place of rest, refuge and refreshment – a symbol of home where we find the essential balance of life; where buoyed-up by friendship and brotherly love we may nurture the renewal which follows dedication to Masonic precepts.

JUNIOR WARDEN: [one second pause] ... The lamp... now dark, but once the light which symbolized a Masonic quest for the truth of God's creation.

SENIOR DEACON: [one second pause] ...The table... an altar uncluttered by the trivialities of life, an ever-present and central aspect of our Masonic dedication, and upon it reposes...

CHAPLAIN: [1/2 second pause] ... The Bible, the gift of God to man within which rests all of the lessons of Masonry; a guide to our happiness and successful life.

MASTER: [1-2 second pause] ... This scene is a reminder of our Brother's peaceful journey through life... a place where one may rest and reflect upon the wonder of creation, our essential harmony with nature and the home we share with loved ones.

From this tranquil and transient scene, our Brother has now journeyed to his eternal and celestial home where in the sublime light of our Creator, lays the fulfillment of God's purpose.

To those who mourn, we deeply, sincerely and affectionately share your sorrow.

Yes... we could easily eliminate the sorrow of death by simply erasing love from our lives, blotting out all hint of fondness, every taste of affection; each clue of devotion.

Gone would be the holding of hands between loved ones who have faced life's trials together.

Gone would be the timid gaze of first love beneath the shrouded lamp post;

Gone would be the goodnight beam of pride above the cradle;

Gone would be the photographs of war heroes upon the mantle;

All gone, traded for the fear of pain, for the dread of temporary death.

Our true condolences then are not only offered to those who mourn, but also to those who have no cause to mourn.

Not only to the parent who longs for a dead child, but also for the people who have no children to love.

Not only for the Widow who aches for the companionship of a departed sweetheart, but also to those who have no sweetheart to miss.

Not only to the son or daughter who grieves for the loss of a parent, but also for those children who have not known a loving parent.

Mourning is a form of rejoicing, a gratitude for love, for memories and for life. Let us share in the understanding that mourning is a fair price to pay for the dividends of love. Remember, even mourning is temporary, for death itself is

as fleeting as life. Just as night's darkness is swallowed by morning light, soon the sting of earthly partings will be healed in the joy of future reunions where we can be together, forever.

The roll of the workmen has been called [insert number] of our Brothers have not answered to their name... they have laid down the working tools of our ancient craft and have been summoned to the Celestial Lodge above by the Supreme Grand Master of us all. No longer do they labor among us, guided by the Great Lights of Masonry. Their days are now illuminated by a far greater light, which we all know.

Officers and Brothers, please rise.

DIRECTION: Master Rises as do all Officers present, stepping down from their stations, the Master and Wardens stand before their stations on the main floor and the Senior Deacon takes his position to the right of the Master and the Chaplain on his left. The Master, Senior Deacon and Chaplain align with the aft vase of flowers so that the Senior Deacon may hand individual flowers to the Master to place upon the altar as names are read. The Chaplain should bear the Bible. The Senior and Junior Wardens should position themselves as if they were honor guards on the right and left sides of the altar, facing the honored guests. **See figure 2.**

MASTER: Tonight we remember those Brothers who have passed their probation here on Earth since our last observance and honor each Widow who has not yet received a token of our fraternal bond.

Brother Secretary, please read the names and Masonic records of our departed Brothers.

DIRECTION: Secretary goes to podium to read the names, Masonic records to include committees headed and or year they were the Master and date each was called to the Celestial Lodge. As each name is read the Senior Deacon will hand a flower to the Master who will place it upon the altar. An additional flower or other symbol will remain (Lambskin) after all the names are read...

SECRETARY: ...and we now remember all of our Brothers who have previously traveled to that undiscovered country, from whose bourn, no traveler returns.

DIRECTION: Master places remaining symbol upon the altar along with the flowers,

MASTER: Upon his admission into the Fraternity, our brother is presented with the lambskin, or white leather apron; it is the badge of a Mason. In his Earthly labors our brother was taught to keep it as an emblem of innocence, unspotted by the world. Upon entering the lodge, the brother is not properly clad unless he wears an apron. He, therefore, who wears the lambskin as a badge of Masonry is thereby continually reminded of that purity of life and conduct, which is essentially necessary to his gaining admission into the Celestial Lodge above, and thus we leave it for him.

DIRECTION: *After a brief pause of reflection, the Master moves before the altar, near the scene, and is joined by the Senior Warden, the roses are set up to his left. The Junior Warden turns and approaches the vase of Roses and will assist the Master in their presentation (he may have a list of the Widow's); the Widow's pins will be staged in advance along with the flowers. The Master, accompanied by the Senior Warden will approach the Junior Warden where the Junior Warden hands the Senior Warden a rose and the Master, the pin. The Master and Senior Warden then move before the honored Widows. See figure 3.*

An alternative may be to make a presentation to the honored guests collectively in memory of their loved ones. If there is no Widow to receive a pin, then each will receive a rose, Widows to receive pins should be recognized by name before recognizing the rest of the honored guests.

MASTER: "This pin was created as an emblem to symbolize our continued concern and honor for the widows of a Brother Master Mason, a Brother whose name added luster to the Craft as he labored with us in The Quarry. Now that his name has been entered upon the Roll of the Celestial Lodge, we cannot forget those things which he loved so deeply, nor can we be unmindful of our duty to him.

It is my distinct privilege to present this emblem to you that you may wear it with great pride. It is our desire that it be to you a reminder of your ties to us; a relationship wherein you will find friends who will assist you in times of need, join with you in times of gladness, and welcome you to a continued association with us as we continue our labors of Friendship, Brotherly Love and Truth.

You are not alone. When moments may cause you to doubt, Look at this emblem and be assured that we are there and we care. This Masonic Widow's Pin was created with the hope that it would be worn by the widow of a Master Mason on all appropriate occasions, especially when traveling, so that she may be recognized, greeted, and assisted when necessary, by Masonic friends throughout the world. It is an emblem of honor and should be worn separately, not in conjunction with other jewelry.

May she who wears this emblem find that she is not alone. We are there and we care.”

[Name of Widow/Ladies]... On behalf of the Brothers of Montgomery Lodge I present you this pin (rose) in memory of [Brother, Name of Brother/Your departed loved ones].

DIRECTION: Master pins or hands the pin to the Widow as appropriate, assisted by the Senior Warden as necessary, once “pined”; the Senior Warden presents the rose to the Widow. Both in step, the Senior Warden and Master return to the Junior Warden until all Widows to be honored have received a pin/rose. When all have been recognized, the Master and Wardens take up their original positions around the altar.

MASTER: Let us pray.

CHAPLAIN: [Still standing]...Heavenly Father we remember on this day our departed Brothers. Grant us your grace that we may see the gate to eternal life; that we may continue our labors on earth in confidence until by your call we are reunited with those who have gone before us. Amen. [Chaplain may substitute a brief reading or a different appropriately themed prayer.]

RESPONSE: So mote it be!

DIRECTION: All return to their stations and take their seats on cue from the Master.

MASTER *: A parting poem**, the author perhaps lost to antiquity:

Don't grieve for me now, I'm free.
I'm following the path God laid for me.
I took his hand when I heard him call.
I turned my back and left it all.

I could not stay another day.
To laugh, to live, to work or play.
Tasks undone must stay that way.
I've found my peace at the close of day.

If parting has left a void,
Then fill it with remembered joy.
A friendship shared, a laugh, a kiss...
Ah yes, these things I too will miss.

Be not burdened with times of sorrow.
I wish you the sunshine of tomorrow.

My life's been full, I've savored much.
Good friends, good times, a loved one's touch.

Perhaps my time seemed all too brief.
Don't lengthen it now with undue grief.
Lift up your heart and share with me.
God wanted me now; he set me free.

DIRECTION: **If there is a member or special guest who would like to do this part, it can be delivered from the podium where the Secretary read the names; this is a very special ceremony, the opportunity to participate should not be too limiting. **Another poem or oration can be considered to keep the ceremony organic and personal. Once the reading is done, the reader will return to their seat.*

MASTER: [Thank the guests and the members for being here, offer thoughts.] Please join us for fellowship and refreshments after the ceremony, but before we depart, Brother Chaplain [rises], please lead us in a closing prayer [Master and officers stand, cuing audience].

CHAPLAIN: May the Lord bless you and keep you; may the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; may the Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace. Amen.

RESPONSE: So mote it be!

SOUND: Jubilant music fades in as the Officers step down from their stations and plays until the lodge room is empty.

DIRECTION: *The Officers approach the honored Widows and offers their arm to escort them to the dining room, once seated the escorts will serve the honored Widows and Guests for the entirety of the evening.*

Fig 1

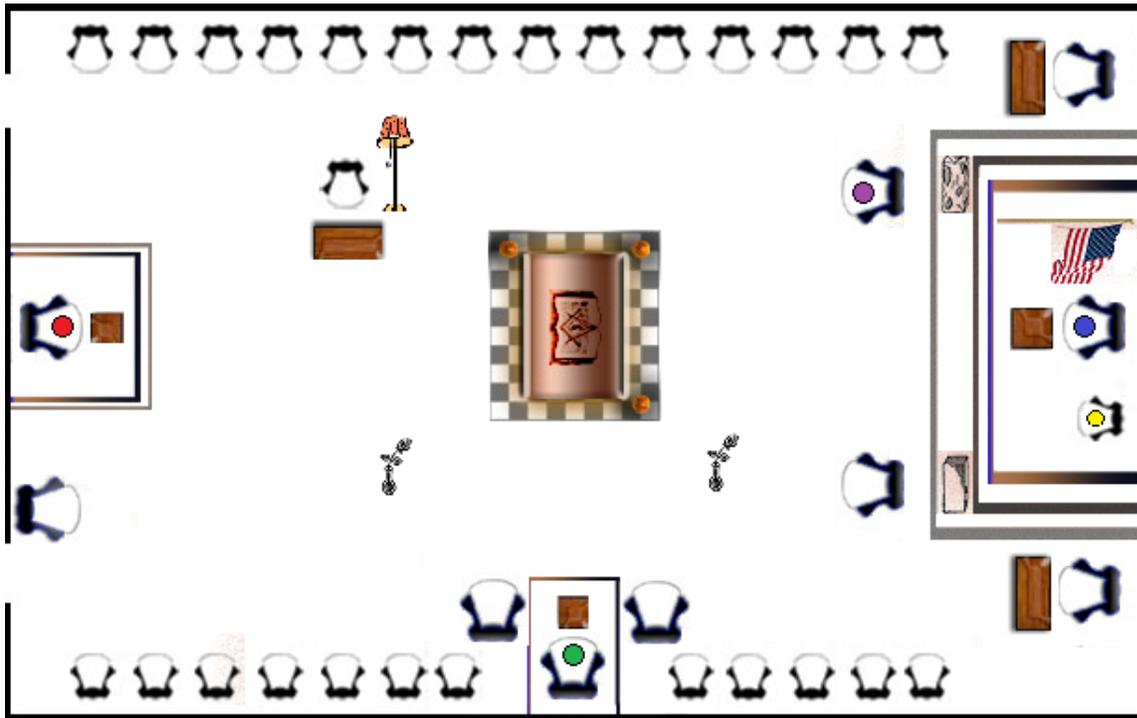


Fig 2 WM, SD, Chaplain move to alter

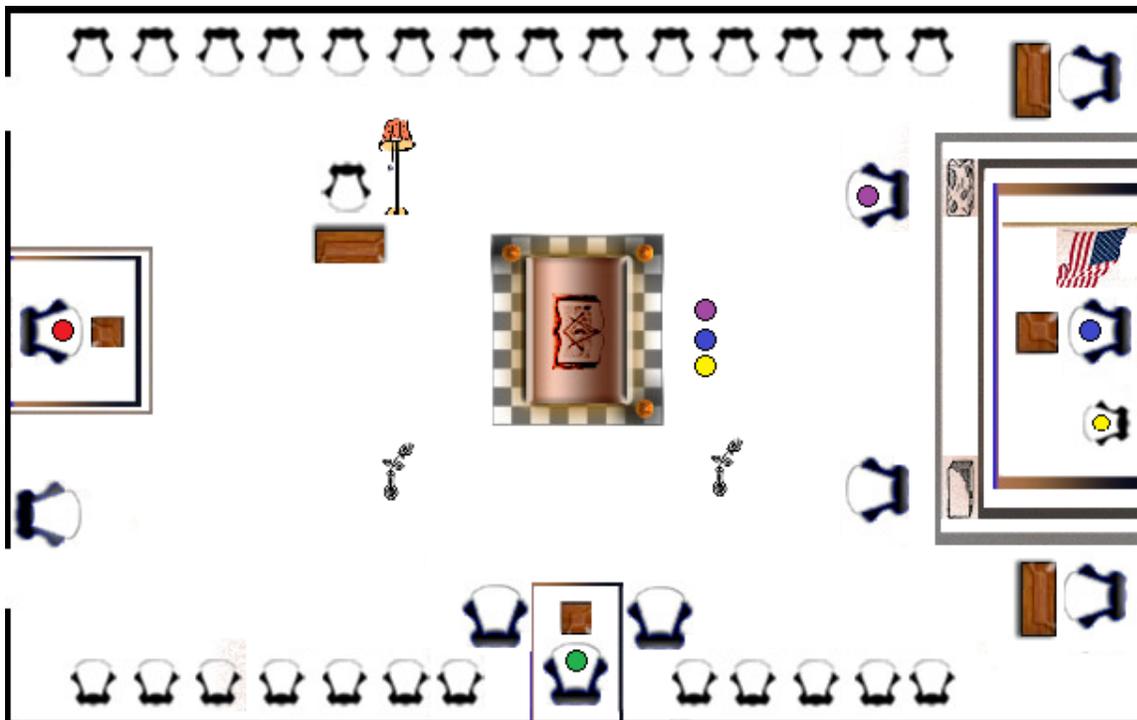


Fig 3 WM, SW, JW move facing seating were Widow(s) are seated. SD, Chaplain do not move.

