

## **WHAT TO DO WHEN A DEATH OCCURS: Temple B'nai Shalom Customs and Practices**

The Temple B'nai Shalom community offers a myriad of services and assistance to help our members through the very difficult time of death and its aftermath. This pamphlet will help guide you through the process.

*Please know that your rabbi and temple community are here for you. If you are encountering a situation where you, or an immediate family member, are facing death, Rabbi Widzer is available for comfort and consolation. He will recite the prayers that are part of our tradition when death is near. He can also assist in making funeral arrangements, answering questions about Jewish customs and practices, and they provide grief counseling before, during and after a loss.*

*In addition, the Bereavement Committee will help guide you through funerals and memorial services held at Temple B'nai Shalom, graveside services officiated by our rabbi, and shiva minyans in your home.*

### **When a Death Occurs or is Imminent**

When you experience the loss of a close family member (i.e., spouse, parent, sibling, child) during the day, call the Temple B'nai Shalom office (703-764-2901) and ask to speak to the rabbi (Rabbi Widzer is off on Mondays). Let the staff know that someone has died. Be prepared to provide contact numbers if you are going out of town.

After office hours, if you have a death and need a rabbi immediately (or are a member and death is imminent and you want a rabbi to be with you), call Rabbi Widzer on his cell (see the Temple Directory). Please use these numbers only for emergency purposes.

Please be prepared to provide the following information:

- Name of congregant
- Name of deceased (including Hebrew name, if known)
- Relationship to congregant
- Date and approximate time of death (before or after sunset)
- Local or out-of-town funeral and location, if known
- Phone number where the family can be reached

Preplanning is encouraged and the rabbi can provide information so that many decisions can be made in advance.

## **Funeral of a Jewish Congregant**

Jewish members in good standing may have a funeral service in the Temple building officiated by a Temple B'nai Shalom rabbi. Our rabbi will coordinate with the family to arrange the date and time for the funeral and come back to the home afterwards to light the seven-day memorial candle. The Bereavement Committee will help to guide the family through the specifics and offer support.

Some questions to consider:

- Where will the funeral service be held?
- Where will interment take place?
- Has the family contacted Jefferson Funeral Chapel or another funeral home of their choice?
- Will the family have a meal of condolence and who will provide set-up?
- If the funeral service is at Temple B'nai Shalom, does the family need a babysitter at TBS during the service?
- Does the family want any meals?
- Does the family want an announcement made to the congregation?

## **Funeral of a Non-Jewish Congregant**

It is Temple B'nai Shalom policy that non-Jewish congregants' funerals may not be performed in the temple building. Non-Jewish members are not guaranteed funerals by our rabbi. The rabbi may, at times, agree to perform a funeral for a non-Jewish congregant who did not practice another religion, if it is held in a funeral home or graveside, and if that congregant had made it known to Rabbi Widzer that he or she regarded Temple B'nai Shalom as his or her spiritual home. Rabbi Widzer reserves the right not to co-officiate in a Christian service, or to officiate at all.

No prayers or rituals may conflict with Jewish law or tradition.

Since non-Jews may not be buried in Jewish cemeteries in our communities, such graveside services must take place in non-sectarian cemeteries or in family plots.

At no time may ashes be brought to TBS or spread on our grounds.

## **Memorial Service**

A memorial service at Temple B'nai Shalom is available for members who are buried out-of-town.

Some questions to consider:

- Will the family have a meal of condolence after the service and who will provide set-up?
- Does the family need a babysitter at TBS during the service?
- Does the family want any meals?
- Does the family want an announcement made to the congregation?

## **Shiva Minyan**

Temple B'nai Shalom offers a shiva minyan, a short prayer service always held in the evening within seven days of a death, at the home of a grieving Jewish member\* (or online via Zoom) who has experienced the loss of a parent, spouse, child, or sibling. You may not have a shiva minyan after the traditional shiva period has ended. The service is led by our rabbi or designated lay leaders and the community gathers to support the mourners. Prayer books, chairs and coffee pots will be provided as needed. TBS volunteers will set up and clean up and desserts will be provided by attendees.

The rabbi must schedule all minyans. Members may not use our books or committee if they choose to have someone else officiate at the minyan.

\*Non-Jewish members do not get shiva minyans as you only have shiva if you are Jewish.

Some questions to consider:

- Will the family sit Shiva? Locally? Out of town? For how long?
- If away, when will the family return home?
- Does the family want a shiva minyan at their home? At TBS? How many people do they expect to attend?
- Does the family want any meals?

## **Sheloshim Minyan**

When members bury loved ones out of town and don't return home in time for a shiva minyan, we offer a sheloshim minyan on the thirtieth day (not Shabbat or holiday). Again, an arbitrary day is not permitted. Only the rabbi schedules these minyans.

## **Temple B'nai Shalom Funeral Minhag (customs)**

- Only funerals of Jewish members are permitted in the TBS building and the rabbi will only officiate at member funerals, if the person is a member in good standing. There are times when the rabbi will agree to bury children of members who may live out of town, be single and not connected to a synagogue, but this is up to the rabbi and the child must practice Judaism.
- The rabbi will officiate at funerals for Jewish parents of members, only if the parents are also TBS members.
- The TBS rabbi performing the funeral or memorial service must approve any eulogies and additions to the service. Anyone speaking must submit a text in advance for approval. Other clergy may not use the pulpit of TBS without Rabbi Widzer's permission.
- When the funeral is held at Temple B'nai Shalom, only a closed casket is permitted. The immediate family may have a brief viewing, if so desired.
- Flowers are not permitted at the funeral or the cemetery.
- The rabbi will do a memorial service at TBS, or bury cremains at a cemetery for a congregant who has been cremated, but no ashes, urns may be brought into TBS.

- No ashes may be sprinkled on Temple grounds.
- It is customary to have a dairy meal of condolence following a funeral or memorial service. Typically, it is provided by friends and neighbors. Please do not serve non-kosher food or milk and meat together at these Jewish events.

## **Donations**

There are no fees or charges for our rabbi to officiate at any of these events or for any support offered by the TBS community. Many of our members have asked for guidance on giving tzedakah at a time of loss. Making a donation to the temple when a rabbi performs a funeral, memorial service, or minyan is a tradition deeply rooted in Judaism. Putting up a memorial plaque is also a beautiful and lasting way to memorialize your loved one.

For the funeral of a temple member, the suggested donation is \$500 or more.

For a memorial service, the suggested donation is \$360 or more.

For a minyan, the suggested donation is a multiple of \$18, with \$108 or \$180 as suggested amounts.

Memorial plaques are \$360.

*The rabbi and members of the Bereavement Committee are available to answer your questions. Please contact the Temple B'nai Shalom office at 703-764-2901.*

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