

Example: Funeral for an Animal

The animal, Hazel, was cremated and a part of the ashes was kept by the family to wear in lockets while the rest was buried under a tree.

Items

- Bell
- Bucket or two of water depending on number of people attending
- Ladle (placed in one of the buckets)
- Wand
- Hazel tree, ashes and paw print
- Picture of Hazel on an easel placed near the bush
- Chairs facing the front towards tree
- Boxes of tissue on TV Trays
- Watering can
- TV Tray and covering

Preparation

Hole should be dug and ashes added. Next plant the tree and pat the soil around it. Finally put the cement paw print near the bush.

Place a bucket of water with a ladle in it near the tree. A second bucket can be included if needed.

Make sure to remind family to bring the ashes that they are keeping. Tell the family that you will spend some private time with them after the ritual is finished.

Gathering

Priest/ess:

(Explain that everyone should stand or sit comfortably facing the front.)

(Explain the ritual act as follows: Pointing to the Hazel tree)

This plant is a Hazel tree. It has been planted in remembrance of its name sake.

As part of this ritual you will be invited to water this plant. In addition you may also share a short memory of Hazel after you water it.

The family will be the first to water this tree and say something if they wish. After they are done I will ask anyone else who wishes to participate to raise a hand. I will indicate the next person to participate.

If you have problems standing but would like to participate let me know and I will come to you. You will then pour the water into this watering can and also say some words if you would like to.

Main Ritual

I ring this bell to formally start this rite. (Ring the bell.)

We come together to honor the memory of Hazel.
We begin by creating a space safe to be with our feelings.
Within this circle grief, anger, joy, and compassion
may be shared without judgment.

(Turn around casting a circle with a wand. Make sure it is big enough to include everyone and the tree.)

Our ancestors were wise enough to leave us stories that give us permission to grieve.

- From the oldest civilization comes the story of Ishtar. When the goddess lost her love Tammuz she let out a loud cry that was heard throughout the land.
Her lament was said to contain enough sorrow to mourn every living thing that ever will be lost.
- In the Abrahamic traditions we are told that when the plant that was shading Jonah died, he was so upset that he stated that he wanted to die also.
- The Greeks told us of Demeter, who makes the world barren in winter, even knowing that her daughter Kore will return from the underworld in spring.

Thus no matter our views of death, we know that it is ok to grieve.

Speak about Hazel

(Share some stories as gotten from the family and from your own life.)

Graveside activity: Water the Tree

Priest/ess: (Stand in front of the tree and say)

John Galsworthy wrote "Not the least hard thing to bear when they go from us, these quiet friends, is that they carry away with them so many years of our own lives."

Let this tree be a reminder of our time spent with Hazel. A living symbol that her influences on our lives remains.

Let us give this tree water as a promise to remember her.

Hazel's family come forth and give water to this tree.

(Hand the ladle to one of the members of the family.)

Would you like to say a few words?

(After each family member has finished they return to their place. Repeat until each family member has watered the tree.)

Indicate that you would like to add water to this tree by raising your hand.

(If you have an assistant have them go to a person with their hand up. If not indicate who should come forward. Hand the ladle to that person. Have them water the tree)

Would you like to say a few words?

(After everyone is done, water the bush yourself and if you knew the animal add a personal memory.)

Move to healing

Priest/ess:

Hazel brought joy to all who saw her. She had a way to make you smile by the way she walked, or panted, or snored. These memories of joy remain with us and new joy shall be added to them. Feeling this joy is the best tribute to Hazel that we can make.

We are come to the end of this rite. After I dismiss the circle I will spend a private moment with the family. During this time feel free to recall a joyous memory of Hazel.

Dismiss Circle

Priest/ess: (Using the wand push the circle down by turning to each quarter while saying)

This circle | of sacred space | that was created | is now open.
(Using your hands push the circle apart to indicate it is open)

As you go forth from this rite take what you need from it to move from grief to joy.

Talk to the family in private

Priest/ess: (Go to the family and hold the container ashes that will be kept)

The tree symbolizes how you shared Hazel with the public and we have honored that relationship today in public.

However, you have a unique private bond that is represented by these ashes which you will keep with you. May both of these symbols bring you comfort.