

Obituary Coordinator Job Description

Rationale:

The UURMaPA Board has determined that honoring and memorializing the deaths of our members is one of several important functions for our membership. In fact, although ministers in fellowship are honored by the UUA, UURMaPA is the only UU entity that honors the death of partners. So coordination of several functions upon the death of our members is an important job for UURMaPA.

Summary:

When any notice of death of a minister or partner is received by the **Obituary Coordinator**, they check membership status, make note of the name and date of death in the record if member or over 65, send information as needed to obituary editors and Connections Network, and post a short notice and/or full obituary to the Announce-List. They track and record actions taken on Obit Chart by self and others, including dates of Announce posting, sending condolence notes and donations honoring the deceased, and the posting short obituaries in Elderberries and in the website archive. They also prepare listing of names and info for use in conference In Memoriam services twice a year. May also receive “pre-obituaries” from members, which are forwarded to the Webmaster to post in a secure area of our website, for later retrieval.

Specifics:

When the **Obituary Coordinator (OC)** receives notice of the death of a minister (usually from the UUA) or partner (from any source) who is an UURMaPA member, they may post a short notice of the death (*outline below*) to the membership via the Announce-List at the following address: uurmapa-announce@lists.uua.org (especially if a memorial service is still pending). The **OC** makes sure that the volunteer **Obituary Editor** (either for ministers or partners) receives any available information about the death so a complete obituary may be prepared. The **OC** maintains a comprehensive table of all member deaths (begun in 2017) that can be used to confirm actions below and to prepare listings for conference In Memoriam services.

The following may need to be notified of the death by the **OC**, especially if a short Announce message is delayed:

- The **Membership Coordinator** is notified of the death (usually by Announce posting) so that the UURMaPA membership and mailing lists can be promptly updated.
- The **President** (usually notified by Announce) sends a letter of condolence to the family of the deceased member.
- The **Connections Chair** (or Assistant) (usually notified by Announce) alerts the Area Connector so they can reach out to the member's family.
- The **Treasurer of UURMaPA** (usually notified by Announce) sends a donation (\$50 in 2016) to honor deceased members. For ministers, the donation will be sent in their memory to the UUMA Endowment Fund. For partners, the donation

of similar amount will be sent in their memory to the charity of choice or as individually arranged.

When the specific **Obituary Editor** has written it, the complete obituary for a member may also be posted by the **OC** on the Announce List at this email address: uurmapa-announce@lists.uua.org .

The **OC** makes note on the chart when the **Newsletter Editor** includes the member's obituary provided by **Obituary Editor** (a version of the complete obituary edited for space, with picture if possible) in an upcoming newsletter, and the Newsletter Editor and sends a copy of that issue to the family of the deceased. The complete version is also posted in the archive on the website by the **Webmaster**, with a picture if possible.

Two times a year, the **OC** provides from their obituary chart a listing of all deaths noted since the last conference in the same area of the country (approximately one year) to the person leading the In Memoriam service for that conference. Currently two conferences are held per year, east and west.

The **OC** should periodically check all columns on the tracking chart to update if actions were taken. This includes removal of deceased name from lists by Membership Coordinator (OC can check Directory on website); date of condolence note (President should notify OC, or check with them); date of donation (Treasurer should notify OC, or check with them); publication of obit in quarterly Elderberries (OC can check issues as they come out); presence of obit info in website archive (OC should check archive on website).

Note:

When a **Board Member** becomes aware of the death of one of our members other than through UURMaPA or denominational notices, they should pass the information along to the **OC** so that the death of a member is not overlooked. Elderberries should include periodic notices to remind members to notify a Board person of the death of any member, minister or partner.

The Board decided to fully honor only the deaths of our own members (ministers or partners), except for the following actions: the **OC** should report via a brief announcement on the death of a minister who was 65 or older, whether or not a member; and the Board should invite the surviving spouse to join UURMaPA (**President** may do this at GA Service of the Living Tradition.)

Members are encouraged to write their own "pre-obits" ("to Remember Me") and submit them to the Webmaster, who will post them to a secure (password protected) area of the website, to hold for future use by the Obit Editors so they may include more personal information in the shared obituary. The **OC** should also keep a parallel set of pre-obits on file, checked periodically with the **Webmaster**, so that they may be provided to appropriate **Obit Editors** as needed.

Skills and Access needed:

1. Comfort working with Word document and Excel spreadsheet files – creating new and making additions to saved death records in data files and folders as needed; sorting spreadsheet information for specific reports on deaths.
2. Access as an Administrator to the UURMaPA Announce e-list, (part of a UUA system) at this link; uurmapa-announce@lists.uua.org , so that death announcements can be posted to UURMaPA members. The Membership Coordinator, the primary Administrator and editor for UURMaPA Announce list, can set up this access. (Note that this is intended only as a one-way “bulletin board” for specific internal announcements that are time-sensitive, although messages prepared by recipients who hit REPLY come back through the system to the Administrator(s).
3. The OC should request addition as a recipient of the UUA’s death notices for ministers, sent from a designee in Professional Development at the UUA (currently this is Aastha Poudel, email apoudel@uua.org). These notices provide a basic format to be edited on behalf of the UURMaPA Board and sent out on Announce.

Resource Files:

- **Obit Chart** of member death information (2017 on) – Excel spreadsheet – additions made whenever a name of deceased is received; other fields need to be updated periodically by Board members or OC research on website.
- **Conference In-Memoriam lists** – includes examples from past few years.
- **Guides for Obits** – information/suggestions/outlines helpful for compiling Announce messages.
- **Folders of obits that were included in newsletters** 2013-present – the first were created by Secretary Marcia Olsen before 2014, and Judy kept them up: moving obit files to a labeled folder for specific Elderberries for each member deceased when obit is included in that issue. Sometimes you need to go back into these folders to find records of specific past deaths. This process is made easier 2017 and later, since the Chart of Member Deaths is set up to show when obit is in an Elderberries issue.
- **Pre-obits** – submitted by members to the Board or Webmaster for our reference after their death; it is helpful to check this list periodically against the file kept by the Webmaster and made available to obit editors.
- **Files by deceased member’s name** and death date – created whenever any e-notice is received: contains all notices received and posted, including the complete obit whenever available from the obit editors.

Basic Death Announcement Guide

This information – or as much as possible – is needed for a brief announcement posted on UURMaPA Announce

Subject line: We will miss: NAME (Birth year – Death year)

The Board of the UU Retired Ministers and Partners Association offers our condolences to the family and friends of (name), who died on (date) at the age of (age).

S/he is survived by (partner, siblings, children, grandchildren, etc.)

A memorial service was/will be held on (date) at (time), (location and address if still in future).

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to (organizations).

In ministerial notices, add the following to the “donations may be made...” section from families:

“UURMaPA will contribute \$50 to the UUMA Endowment Fund

(www.uuma.org/donations/donate.asp?id=11276) in honor of our colleague’s ministry.

In partner’s notices, add the following to the “donations may be made...” section from families:

UURMaPA will contribute \$50 to his/her church or a charity of his/her choice.

Notes of condolence can be sent to (name and address).

A more complete obituary will be forthcoming after biographical research has been completed. If any readers would wish to contribute information or reminiscences, we would welcome them. Please send them to (use either as appropriate)

UURMaPA's clergy obituary editor, Jay Atkinson - jayatk40@gmail.com.

UURMaPA's partner obituary editor, Roger Rochester – uuroger@gmail.com

Drafted and edited by Judy Gibson, Obituary Coordinator 2018-2019 (Sept. 2019 and May, 2020)

Much of contents repeated in Operating Procedures.