Resources for Observing TDOR
From: Trans & Diverse Genders Working Group, MCC

With significant contributions from working group members:
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General: Transgender Day of Remembrance is held on or around November 20th. The Transgender Day of Remembrance was founded in 1999 by Gwendolyn Ann Smith, a transgender woman, to memorialize the murder of transgender woman Rita Hester in Allston, Massachusetts. In 2010, TDOR was observed in over 185 cities throughout more than 20 countries. For additional background on TDOR from a faith perspective, try:

http://www.transfaithonline.org/tdor/what/

A TDOR observance may be just a portion of worship time, a full worship service, a separate event in partnership with other churches, or a separate, secular event. As with the LGB communities, the “T” has had their share of abuse from religious organizations and so holding an event in a place of worship may result in fewer attendees.

Included in this toolkit are several person’s thoughts on a TDOR event and several resources that may be used as a template or an inspiration for your observance. Many observances read or display a list of transgender persons murdered because of their efforts to live authentically. Here are three websites that provide the names of people known to have been killed in the US during 2017:

https://www.advocate.com/transgender/2017/9/15/these-are-trans-people-killed-2017

https://www.glaad.org/blog/glaad-calls-increased-and-accurate-media-coverage-transgender-murders


Observations from Brent Stansfield:
“Last year, I attended a service where there was a candle ceremony:

Numerous candles are lit before the service and placed on the altar. At some point, the names of those murdered are read. During this reading, the candles are blown/snuffed out one by one. The lights can be increasingly dimmed as this happens as well.

*I do worry though that putting out all of the candles falsely represents the vanishing of all trans people, when done in a space without adequate trans representation being present.

I will also say that there were some things that did not work at the service I attended last year: Namely that it was more a TDOR portion of a service, that also had an unrelated sermon that was about Thanksgiving Day. So maybe we should include that if done as a portion of a larger service, please be aware of how the other parts of the service will come across differently.

Some other thoughts:

I like emphasizing that loss of those murdered is not just loss of "life", but that their laughs, smiles, thoughts, ideas, etc. are also no longer with us. They had stuff to contribute to the world and their community, and the world and their community suffer from no longer having those contributions. Even their presence and life itself were contributions to this world and their community.

I also like to emphasize that it is mostly black and brown trans women that are getting murdered. Racism should be talked about at TDOR. (Trans)Misogyny should be talked about at TDOR.
Personally, I like to speak against is the assumption that progress is being made for trans rights, when the uptick in murders is saying that the pushback is stronger than whatever legal ground has been gained.

Some other "obvious" tips might be:

Get a trans speaker for the service, if at all possible. Especially try to get a black or brown woman.

Observations from Rev. Aaron Miller:
“I have attached;

1) The bulletin we used last year for our TDOR. It offers to serve as a template, if others wish to use and revise. Each year, my intention is to divide this service into 3 parts: grieving who we have lost, acknowledging the progress that has been made this past year (with speakers), and inspiring/charging those to go forward to make a difference in the coming year (also speakers, or me). Last year we did 4 voices that was a powerful moment. We had these very different voices positioned to surround the attendees—to envelop them with these voices

2) A poem I wrote to include as part of a UCC presentation I did several months ago--Trans* 101 and full inclusion/welcome by the church of those who are living a transgender experience

We create a video each year that has the names and pictures (when available) for those we have lost this past year. It plays with a song. And, people are invited to come forward a light a candle as this plays. This is very emotional so it is important to break with song after and then transition to more hopeful messages, along with empowerment.

The fellowship after is as important as the program. People need to connect and feel grounded and supported by community.

This year our theme is 'NOT ONE MORE.' I feel more of a rally cry is appropriate this year, given the hit-after-hit that we have taken by this administration. And, the negative impact this has had most importantly to our Trans* youth. With the high (40% attempt) of suicide--said to be climbing—we must stand firm, speak out, and bond with one another in solidarity...and resist.”

Observations from Emma Chattin:
“I really want to echo Rev. Aaron Miller's words of wisdom and experience with regard to using multiple speakers & community voices, and structuring the service in segments that create space for grieving, personal reaction and action, and concluding with hope, inspiration, and challenge.

I also reinforce his words regarding the time of hospitality, community, and friendship afterward. Light refreshments. Important, and not an uncommon tradition
following a memorial service
in many communities.
That is how we approach it.

We usually ask a supportive area organization
to help provide this
(we aim to involve and engage as many organizations
and affirming churches
in the service and process
as possible).

This gathering time afterward
over cheese, crackers, and cookies
has provided a lot of space for community connection.
New organizations and community services
have actually been born through such connections,
calling out new life
from spaces of grief”

**Prayers:**

**PRAYER ~ Adapted from Reuben Zellman**

God full of mercy, bless the souls of all who are in our hearts on this Transgender Day of Remembrance. We pray for the strength to carry on their legacy of vision, bravery, love, and authenticity.

And as we remember them, we remember with them the thousands more who have taken their own lives. We pray for resolve to root out the injustice, ignorance, and cruelty that grow despair.

And we pray, God, that all those who perpetrate hate and violence will speedily come to understand that Your creation has many faces, many genders, many holy expressions.

Blessed are they, who have allowed their divine image to shine in the world.

Blessed is God, in Whom no light is extinguished.

*(LIGHT CANDLE)*

**Poems and Readings:**

**Every Note** by Rev. Aaron Miller
Like a note in a song, we are each essential.
A beat cannot be skipped without interrupting the song’s rhythm and cadence. Would we say one note is wrong, unnecessary or has less value than another... when the song is so beautiful that it touches our hearts and compels us to sing along?
Different since birth, the transgender experience has been, at times, difficult, isolating, and even painful in a world that does not seek to understand.

Arms did not reach for me. No band aids were offered to protect my spirit and to heal my soul. I was not accepted as one of the boys and I definitely was not a girl. I was a note in the wrong song.

I cried out to God “Why did you create me so differently?”

In the quiet of the sanctuary I had created... something stirred. A still small voice whispered “You are a note in the song that I am singing” I answered “Why then am I so different?”

And, God said “You are a beautiful note that creates the harmony in my song --- a song that you call humanity. Melody and harmony need each other to create something new and beautiful together.

So, play your note with joy, my child. You are part of a song that is not yet complete.

Look and you will see... hearts opening to this beautiful song. Some are even compelled to sing along.

I ask that you have faith enough to trust the Songwriter For you are my beloved. And, your note is beautiful and essential---to Me.”

I AM
I defied the gender binary. I challenged the first pronouncement ever made about me. I questioned the evidence my body presented to me, and I took issue with the guidance of my parents, who assumed, and nudged my life down one path without even asking me if that's where I wanted to go. I confounded my society and my culture, and I ignored what I was told was the norm. I lived on the edges and I defied definitions. I am far more than the names I have been called. I have done many things and lived many lives. I am the rule-breaker, the exception, the trickster, the one who divides and multiplies the gender binary until it becomes a string of infinite possibilities.
In ancient times I was celebrated
as one who walked in many worlds.
I was revered as the one who embodied transformation
and who showed the world
that we can change
But ancient wisdom has long been forgotten
and now I pay the price for our forgetfulness.
We tend to behave badly
Toward that which we do not understand,
and therein lies the pain.
Like all of creation,
I am a mystery.
I don't seek to be understood.
I just seek to be accepted.

By Emma Chattin
Written for the 2009 Transgender Day of Remembrance,
Appeared in MCC's "Holy Conversations",
and in Trans Bodies, Trans Selves: A Resource for the Transgender Community

Transgender Day of Remembrance in 4 Voices

The following prayer was first given at First UU in Brooklyn on Nov 6th, 2011 as part of our early service honoring the Transgender Day of Remembrance. It was spoken with 4 voices. Each voice's part is listed in bold. Some lines have only one person speaking them; some lines have two; and some lines have all four voices. I have repeated the prayer below four times – with the appropriate bolding for each voice.

Prayer for Transgender Day of Remembrance

Voice 1

Spirit of Life, God of Many Names and One Transforming and Abundant Love,

Broaden our imagination to see you in the faces of all those we meet along the way.

May your teachers come in all shapes and sizes, all genders and all sexes,

and may we have the courage to hear their lessons so that our lives may be moved.

We live in a world whose bodies are sometimes broken, or broken down, or weighted under burdens that none could hope to carry alone.

We live in a world where we have all the capacity we ever needed to make another life that much easier.

And yet we don’t always use our power to help...
we don't always allow others in...
we don't always accept help when it is offered...
we don't always know when we can no longer do it alone.

Spirit of Life – open our hearts to the community of souls that surround us;
Allow our words to be softened before the miracle of being;
Strengthen our voice so that it may be a service to others;
And stir in us compassion when it is gone, temperance when we are in our might,
and hope when it is hard to find.

We especially hold dear this morning all the lives who have suffered harm for the bodies they were born into;
for the genders whose expressions didn’t stand up to the gaze of society;
and the lives that were lost due to violence born of fear, of hatred or of self-doubt.
We pray for our youth who are wrestling with the choice of whether to live or to die.

May our love, our compassion, and our commitment to seeing a world more free, and more free-spirited, help them to find the hope they need to continue living.

Voice 2

Spirit of Life, God of Many Names and One Transforming and Abundant Love,

Broaden our imagination to see you in the faces of all those we meet along the way.

May your teachers come in all shapes and sizes, all genders and all sexes,
and may we have the courage to hear their lessons so that our lives may be moved.

We live in a world whose bodies are sometimes broken, or broken down, or weighted under burdens that none could hope to carry alone.

We live in a world where we have all the capacity we ever needed to make another life that much easier.

And yet we don’t always use our power to help...
we don't always allow others in...

we don't always accept help when it is offered...

we don’t always know when we can no longer do it alone.

Spirit of Life – open our hearts to the community of souls that surround us;

Allow our words to be softened before the miracle of being;

**Strengthen our voice so that it may be a service to others;**

And stir in us compassion when it is gone, **temperance when we are in our might,**

and hope when it is hard to find.

We especially hold dear this morning all the lives who have suffered harm for the bodies they were born into;

**for the genders whose expressions didn’t stand up to the gaze of society;**

and the lives that were lost due to violence born of fear, of hatred or of self-doubt.

We pray for our youth who are wrestling with the choice of whether to live or to die.

**May our love, our compassion, and our commitment** to seeing a world more free, and more free-spirited, **help them to find the hope they need to continue living.**

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**Voice 3**

Spirit of Life, God of Many Names and One Transforming and Abundant Love,

Broaden our imagination to see you in the faces of all those we meet along the way.

**May your teachers come in all shapes and sizes, all genders and all sexes,**

and may we have the courage to hear their lessons so that our lives may be moved.

We live in a world whose bodies are sometimes broken, **or broken down,** or weighted under burdens that none could hope to carry alone.

We live in a world where we have all the capacity we ever needed to make another life that much easier.

**And yet we don’t always use our power to help...**
we don't always allow others in...

we don't always accept help when it is offered...

we don’t always know when we can no longer do it alone.

Spirit of Life – open our hearts to the community of souls that surround us;

**Allow our words to be softened before the miracle of being;**

Strengthen our voice so that it may be a service to others;

And stir in us compassion when it is gone, **temperance when we are in our might,**

and hope when it is hard to find.

We especially hold dear this morning all the lives who have suffered harm for the bodies they were born into;

for the genders whose expressions didn’t **stand up to the gaze of society;**

**and the lives that were lost due to violence born of fear, of hatred or of self-doubt.**

We pray for our youth who are wrestling with the choice of whether to live or to die.

**May our love, our compassion, and our commitment** to seeing a world more free, **and more free-spirited,** help them to find the hope they need to continue living.

Voice 4

Spirit of Life, God of Many Names and One Transforming and Abundant Love,

Broaden our imagination to see you in the faces of all those we meet along the way.

May your teachers come in all shapes and sizes, **all genders and all sexes,**

**and may we have the courage to hear their lessons so that our lives may be moved.**

We live in a world whose bodies are sometimes broken, or broken down, **or weighted under burdens that none could hope to carry alone.**

We live in a world where we have all the capacity we ever needed to make another life that much easier. **And yet we don’t always use our power to help...**

we don’t always allow others in...
we don't always accept help when it is offered…
we don't always know when we can no longer do it alone.

Spirit of Life – open our hearts to the community of souls that surround us;
Allow our words to be softened before the miracle of being;
Strengthen our voice so that it may be a service to others;
And stir in us compassion when it is gone, temperance when we are in our might,
and hope when it is hard to find. We especially hold dear this morning all the lives who have suffered harm for the bodies they were born into; for the genders whose expressions didn’t stand up to the gaze of society; and the lives that were lost due to violence born of fear, of hatred or of self-doubt.

We pray for our youth who are wrestling with the choice of whether to live or to die.

May our love, our compassion, and our commitment, to seeing a world more free, and more free-spirited, help them to find the hope they need to continue living.

Example Order of Worship:

WELCOME AND OPENING COMMENTS

OPENING PRAYER:

SONG: “I Will Change Your Name”

RESPONSIVE READING adapted from We Remember Them from the Jewish Book of Prayer (response by McCallum/Miller),

(Community response is in bold print)

In the rising of the sun and in its going down, we remember them.

We remember their radiant light that brightened the night with their life.
In the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter, we remember them.
We remember the warmth of their spirit and the joy they shared
In the opening of buds and in the rebirth of spring, we remember them.

**We remember who they blossomed to become, claiming their true selves.**

In the blueness of the sky and in the warmth of summer, we remember them.

**We remember them in tank tops and tube tops, practical sandals and colorfully decorated flip-flops.**

In the rustling of the leaves and in the beauty of autumn, we remember them.

**We remember the way transition brought out their most vibrant colors, a glorious and splendid array.**

In the beginning of the year and when it ends, we remember them.

**We remember their hopes and dreams at each New Year and we mourn their gifts, now lost forever.**

When we are weary and in need of strength, we remember them.

**We remember their fierce courage to live as their authentic selves.**

When we are lost and sick at heart, we remember them.

**We remember they once felt lost too yet said “yes” to life.**

When we have joys we yearn to share, we remember them.

**We remember their joy, their pride, their excitement, and the love they gave to the world around them.**

So long as we live, they too shall live...

**...for they live on in our hearts and in our commitment to create a society that truly values acceptance, inclusion, justice and love.**

**READING:** Remembrance in 4 Voices

**NAMES HELD IN SACRED REMEMBRANCE**

Video Presentation of Names

Candle Lighting

Interfaith Prayer

**SPEAKERS:**
SONG: “One Light”

*Lighting of Our Candles*

CLOSING COMMENTS AND SENDING

CLOSING SONG: “This little light of mine”

Please join us as we gather for a time of food and fellowship...

Metropolitan Community Church of Hartford

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Email: mcchartford@aol.com and Pastor: rev.aaronmiller@yahoo.com

Music As We Gather Daniel Scearce
Centering At the sound of the singing bowl, please take a moment
to prepare for our time together.
Chalice Lighting Rev. Dr. Linda Olson Peebles
~ by John Monroe, adapted Minister of Faith in Action
UU Congregation Arlington
Lighting of the Candles Heather James
MCC of Northern Virginia
Welcome and Opening Prayer Rev, David Miller
UU Congregation Fairfax
Call To Gather ~ adapted from Kathleen McTique Rev. Katie Strednak Singer
Immanuel Presbyterian Church, McLean
Moment of Silent Reflection
Gathering Song Eli, Eli Rabbi Jeffrey Saxe
Hannah Senesh Temple Rodef Shalom
Falls Church
[Oh God, my God
I pray that these things never end
The sand and the sea
The rush of the waters
The crash of the heavens
The prayer of the heart

Moment of Silent Reflection
Prophetic Community Voices
Past Jamie Pendarvis
Present Sara Simone
Future Davina Johnson

Moment of Silent Reflection
Reading We Remember Them Rev. Russell Heiland
Adapted from Roland B. Gittelsohn Unity of Fairfax

Moment of Silent Reflection
Song of Remembrance Fire & Rain UUCF Trio
by James Taylor John Graham,
Laura Weiss, Sarah Jebian

Moment of Silent Reflection
Prayer of Remembrance Rabbi Jeffrey Saxe
Temple Rodef Shalom
Falls Church

Moment of Silent Reflection
We Remember
Introduction Chaiya Mohanty
Introduction and Names Reading adapted from a poem by Chaiya Mohanty
Nooney Norwood, Brandi Bledsoe, Jazz Alford, Crystal Edmonds, T.T. Saffore
Rae’Lynn Thomas, Erykah Tijerina, Skye Mockabee, Dee Whigham, Deeniquia Dodds
“Goddess” Diamond, Amos Beede, Mercedes Successful, Tyreece “Reecy” Walker,
Keyonna Blakeney, Shante Issac, Quartney Davia Dawson-Yochum, Kedarie/Kandicee Johnson, Demarkis Stansberry, Maya Young
Veronica Banks Cano, Jasmine Sierra, Monica Loera

Moment of Silent Reflection
After all the candles have been extinguished, there will be a time of darkness and silence.

Song of Hope I Am Willing
by Holly Near
Community Song Draw The Circle MCC NoVA Music Ministry
Kurt Jaeger,
Jeanné Bennett-Bailey, Jane Bennett-Bailey,
Jeff Young, John Corbin

Joined by UUCF Trio
John Graham,
Laura Weiss, Sarah Jebian

by Mark Miller & Gordon Light
Draw the circle, Draw the circle wide
No one stands alone, We’ll stand side by side
Draw the circle wide, Draw it wider still
Let this be our song: No one stands alone
Standing side by side
Draw the circle, Draw the circle wide.
(Something here) Rev. Anya Sanmler-Michael
UU Congregation Sterling
Closing Words Rev. Emma Chattin
MCC of Northern Virginia
Executive Director, TGEA