

Dear XXX

In these times, we are facing many challenges. In normal times, we light the *yahrzeit* or memorial candle at home on the evening before this date. In normal times we offer a *mitzvah* in the synagogue on the Shabbat immediately afterwards, so that you can honour their memory and recite *kaddish* in the community.

Very sadly, these are not ordinary times. But it is ever more important to honour the memories of our loved ones in ways that strengthen our connection to them and to the community.

If you have a candle at home, then you have the option to light it on the evening before this date. Jewish tradition recognises that memorial lights were always made of a variety of different materials and even include electric tea lights nowadays. If you do not have a memorial candle in your home, please find a safe alternative that you can easily use. If you do not have a safe alternative to hand, my strong advice to you is to leave a physical space where you would normally light the candle, just for this year. We must remember that all our *mitzvot*, or commandments, and customs, are given to us to enhance our lives. We should not be making extra shopping trips at this time, or asking others to do this for us.

Indeed, lighting a memorial candle at the *yahrzeit* is a very recent Jewish custom. Until around the 1700s it was far more usual for Jews to fast on the *yahrzeit*, and to give *tsedakkah* to the poor. In fact, *tsedakkah* for the poor always was more strongly urged, because many people can't safely fast. In these days, fasting is not a sensible act, since it makes us more vulnerable. But there are many many charities, including local food banks, that need your extra support at this time. I suggest you make your donation in memory of your loved one.

Finally, while it is not possible to offer each other the physical comfort of coming to synagogue, and joining in with *kaddish*, please let us know if you would like your relative's name to be included when *kaddish* is recited when we come together online over Shabbat. I hope it will be helpful for you to know that our rabbis and community members are thinking of you.

If you would like the name of your relative read at a service, please complete the online *yahrzeit* slip which can be found at with the details.

May God comfort all who mourn, and wishing you long life

Rabbi Shulamit Ambalu