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## Public Rituals - The Candlelight Ceremony

### OVERVIEW

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The Candlelight Ceremony is one of the most recent entries into the canon of Phi Kappa Tau's public ritual. The original intention of the Candlelight Ceremony was to close out the Brotherhood Banquet that historically concludes the National Convention of Phi Kappa Tau. It is now common for the Candlelight Ceremony to close out any large group gathering of Phi Kappa Tau members.

This can be at chapter anniversary celebrations, national educational programs, it has even been done virtually. Properly done it is a moving ceremony with a powerful visual. Preparation is key for a properly executed Candlelight Ceremony.

### CEREMONY PREPARATION

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Fittingly for the Candlelight Ceremony, you first must have candles. These are to be small handheld candles with a wax drip guard, these can be purchased at most church supply stores or online. When bought in bulk and properly stored after each use you shouldn't have to purchase these frequently but you should check several days in advance of your event that you have enough candles to accommodate your guests.

Additionally there should be four distinct candles to represent the founders as well as one larger candle to represent the eternal flame of brotherhood. These should be visible to all and placed at a distinct location, typically at a table near the master of ceremonies. In the event of your venue not permitting the use of candles electric candles may be substituted. Test each electric candle prior to distribution.

Select in advance the members who will represent the four founding fathers, there should be intentionality behind this decision and not random volunteers. If multiple generations or subgroups of brothers are present try to represent as many groups as possible with the founders. If possible, rehearse the brotherhood song in advance and have a few strong voices lead the key and tempo of the song. The music and lyrics should be made available to the brothers, a chapter set should be printed and reused each year, or you can add them to the back of a printed program depending on the type of event.

In advance of the ceremony check how dark your venue can become. Talk with the facilities staff in advance so they understand the queues needed to achieve the lights dampening. Ideally, outside of "EXIT" signs, the room is only illuminated by candles when indicated.

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## SCRIPTING

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*Four candles sit unlit at an altar, in the middle of them is a large candle - the lone flickering light. Handheld candles are made readily accessible yet at present moment untouched by brothers present at the ceremony.*

MASTER OF CEREMONIES: (Self script a transition into the ceremony, thank those who are there, reflect briefly on the fellowship that has been experienced. Use this to transition into the scripted part of the ceremony.)

MASTER OF CEREMONIES: It is fitting that we celebrate the birth of an experience which began more than 100 years ago on a cold, March day on the campus of Miami University with four of those esteemed brothers. On that significant and very special day, a group of courageous and determined young men—21 to be exact—gathered to share a belief in themselves, to share a vision, and to share the experience of true fraternity.

I can almost hear those men saying ...

“I shall try always to discharge the obligation to others which arises from the fact that I am a fraternity man.” Although it would be nearly 44 years later before those exact words were penned by brother Roland Maxwell, Pi chapter, Southern California.

Those 21 men had absolutely no thought that we —on this night, on this occasion—would be honoring the decisions they made in Miami’s Old Main building that special day over 115 years ago.

Time passes. Over the years, many of us have come to realize that, very often, where no tree exists, we must be willing to plant one so that others may enjoy its fruit and shade.

You each are here this evening because you are helping plant trees; your continuing belief in the experience of the Fraternity will keep those trees healthy for generations to come.

Thank you. Thank you for your willingness to give Phi Kappa Tau fruit, shade, and strength.

I am genuinely confident those early pioneers of our Fraternity would each be enthusiastic about your presence here tonight.

The fact is, those men who gathered on the Miami campus were not myths. Indeed, they were flesh and blood. In those early minutes and hours of the birth of the Non-Fraternity Association, our founding brothers were also students, just like most of you who are here this night.

There happens to be an old Welsh proverb which says: He that would be a leader must first be a bridge.

He that would be a leader must first be a bridge.

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Those 21 men—and the four who were ultimately chosen to be recognized as founders—had precious little way to know that they were bridge builders.

In fact, virtually to the man, they had absolutely no vision that their great bond would last beyond their college years.

Many of the alumni members of this Fraternity who are with us this evening have—themselves—been bridge builders though probably not realizing it.

Now it is up to our undergraduate brothers to carry on the tradition. Tomorrow is too soon upon us.

So, it seems it is our job—yours and mine—student members and alumni alike—to make certain that the bridges we each build are sturdy, sound, and able to withstand the test of time.

Meeting the test of time has always been a strength of this Fraternity.

I'm pleased to escort you through a tradition in our Fraternity, the Phi Kappa Tau Candlelight Ceremony. The Candlelight Ceremony has been a part of the Fraternity's history since it first began in 1975 at our National Convention in Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri.

Tonight, it is my pleasure to invite four undergraduate brothers to represent our four honored founders. (Insert names here, All in the following format: Full Name/Chapter/School)

The North American college fraternity is now over 240 years old. But it is not a fragile heirloom to be housed in a museum. And it most certainly is not a relic of days gone by.

Rather, the North American college fraternity is warranted to be of great value, and the warranty is good only for the intended purpose. That purpose is to build better citizens. That purpose is to build better men. These four men here assembled are living, breathing reflections of our purpose—building better citizens, building better men.

Brothers, yours is an important responsibility this night. Upon you rests the task of carrying forward the founders' original spark of brotherhood to your brothers here assembled.

*[pause]*

Founder Dwight Douglass, class of 1906; William Shideler, class of 1907; Clinton Boyd, class of 1908; and Taylor Borradaile, class of 1908 would each be proud to be with us this evening. Somehow, I believe they are with us. Phi Kappa Tau is committed to developing values, character, and good citizens. Those four men, together with their associates, made a similar commitment to those same virtues.

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Now, I invite brother (insert name, chapter, university) representing Founder Douglass, to take a spark from our symbolic Founders Candle.

*[pause, the brother lights their candle]*

Founder Douglass was the oldest of our founders. He presided over the first meeting on March 17, 1906, just as he was completing his final year at Miami. He played football. Physically, he was probably the biggest male student on campus. Douglass served in the Army in France in World War I and was exposed to lethal nerve gas during combat, a condition that was to impair his health the remainder of his life. In his later years, he was a short-story writer, using a pen name he never revealed to his family. To this day, we have no knowledge of his writings.

He died in 1940 and is buried in Hammond, Louisiana. His death took from us the first of our founders. Now I invite brother (insert name, chapter, university) representing Founder Shideler, to take a symbolic spark from the Founders Candle.

*[pause, the brother lights their candle]*

Founder Shideler was the intellectual of the founding group, having the nickname “Doc” even as a student. He entered Miami in 1904 and graduated in three years. He returned to Miami with a Ph.D. in geology from Cornell University in 1910, subsequently teaching geology at Miami for 47 years, a record still standing. He attended his last Convention in Pasadena, California, in 1958 and for the final time personally presented the Shideler Award.

Shideler died the following December and is the only founder to be buried in Oxford, Ohio. Now I invite brother insert (name, chapter, university) representing Founder Boyd to take a spark from the Founders Candle.

*[pause, the brother lights their candle]*

Clinton Boyd came to Miami in 1904. Together with Shideler, he helped organize the unaffiliated men of the student body. He ran track and was an outstanding orator. Following receipt of his law degree from Michigan, he practiced law in Middletown, Ohio, for the remainder of his life. He helped initiate his son, Clinton, Jr. in 1948 at Alpha chapter.

Founder Boyd was killed tragically in an automobile accident in 1950. His grandson Mark, whom he never met, would be initiated into an Alpha chapter in 1971.

Now I invite brother (insert name, chapter, university) representing Founder Borradaile, to take a spark from the Founders Candle.

*[pause, the brother lights their candle]*

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Founder Borradaile came to Miami in the fall of 1904 to study science. Raised in a Quaker family, his parents wanted him to attend Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana, a noted Quaker school. But science was his first love, and he chose Miami. As a student, he possessed remarkable organizational and political abilities, earning him the nickname “Boss.”

At his death in 1977 at age 92, Brother Borradaile had lived almost 20 years longer than any other founder, and at that time was truly the only link to the founders that many younger members had. He thus became the fourth and last founder to live on only in our memories.

[pause]

I now ask that the four brothers take positions at the four corners of our space, and that all brothers present rise and join in a circle with their candles, taking a spark of brotherhood as you do.

[pause]

I offer each of you this timely prose, penned not by a member of this Fraternity, but created by someone who truly understood the experience of true brotherhood.

An old man, going a lone highway, came at the evening, cold and gray, to a chasm vast, and deep, and wide. The old man crossed in the twilight dim; the sullen stream had no fear for him.

But he turned, when safely on the other side, and built a bridge, to span the tide.

“Old man,” said a fellow pilgrim near, “You are wasting your strength with building here, your journey soon will end with the close of day. You never again will pass this way. You’ve crossed the chasm deep and wide. Why build you a bridge at evening tide?”

“Good friend, in the path that I have come,” he said, “There followeth after me today, a young man whose feet must pass this way. This chasm that has been naught to me, to that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be. He, too, must cross in the twilight dim—so, good friend, I am building this bridge for him.”

“I am building this bridge for him.”

Now we give pause to just what we are about.

Tonight, we each are charged with the task of making certain that— individually and collectively—we continue to build bridges. Indeed, to plant trees for those yet to come. For those whom we may never meet. But all the while knowing they will be better for our having been here today.

And so, we grow, generation by generation.

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Now it is fitting that, as brothers, we sing our Brotherhood Song.

*[Brotherhood Song is sung]*

We've just sung our traditional Brotherhood Song, closing ceremonies, Conventions, chapter meetings; wherever brothers have gathered, demonstrating for all to hear the depth of our bond. We are brothers now and ever. Today, tomorrow, next month. Next year. Now and ever.

*This concludes the program*