

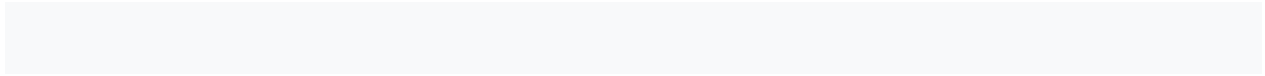
Philippe McGuire

*December 3, 1955 – November 20, 2021*

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Minister: Benjamin Y

**July 15, 2023**



**[Introductory Music: “Vazgeçtim”]**

(Musicians: Moshe V, kanun; Alex S, clarinet)

**[Minister’s Introduction]**

Welcome friends, and a special welcome to Philippe’s brother Daniel and his wife Stephanie, who are with us now.

We are here today to honor the life of our beloved friend, Philippe McGuire. We are here to hold Philippe in our hearts for this brief period, and then release him, together transforming our sorrow into presence.

At the death of a friend, we can see their play as a perfect, complete, and realized destiny. Now we can appreciate the payment and contribution that Philippe made. He had a great zest for living well, and he wanted to share that zest with his friends. In the face of difficult obstacles, he gripped his life and the school with courage and tenacity. His generosity was abundant, and so was his love for his family, his friends, and his teacher.

Let us stand and remember Philippe in silent presence.

*(Silence)*

Thank you.

The physical body is designed to produce presence and being, and then to be laid aside. Walt Whitman said, “The best of me then, when no longer visible, for toward that I have been incessantly striving.” Philippe has taken with him the presence that he has gained in this lifetime, and his connection with Influence C. Our teacher has said, “That is all we can take with us, but it is more than enough.”

[Reading: from Rilke's "Ninth Elegy"]  
(Reader: Conrad C)

Why, when this span of life might be spent  
as laurel, a little darker than every  
other green, with tiny waves on the edges  
of each leaf (like the smile of a wind) – why then  
have to be human – and, avoiding fate,  
long for fate? ...

Oh, *not* for some dream of happiness,  
that premature profit of an imminent loss.  
Not out of curiosity, not to exercise the heart,  
all of which would pulse with laurel . . . . .

But because being here is so much, and because everything here  
seems to need us, all this fleetingness  
that strangely entreats us. Us, the most fleeting . . .  
*Once* for each thing, only once. Once and no more. And we, too,  
only once. Never again. But to have been  
*once*, even though only once:  
this having been *earthly* seems lasting, beyond repeal.

Earth, isn't this what you want: to arise  
in us invisibly? Isn't it your dream  
to be invisible someday? Earth! Invisible!  
What, if not transformation, is your urgent charge?  
Earth, my darling I will! Oh believe me,  
you need no more of your Springtimes to win me over –, *one*,  
just one, is already too much for my blood.  
Namelessly I'm wed to you forever.  
You have always been right, and your most sacred tenet  
is Death the intimate Friend.

Look, I am living. On what? Neither childhood nor future  
grows less . . . . . Supernumerous existence  
wells up in my heart.

(*trans. Edward Snow & adapted*)

**[Eulogy: Guinevere R. M]**

“How’s my timing?” That would be Philippe calling from Paris. His phone had become his lifeline to friends at Apollo and in other Fellowship centers. He actively reached out and was patient and understanding when the timing of his call may not have suited our schedules.

Philippe’s parents met in France after World War II. His father was American, and his mother was from an upper-class French family. Through his maternal grandmother, he learned about good manners and refined bearing. Philippe was born on December 3, 1955, the second son in the family after his brother Daniel. In his later years he always kept nearby a portrait of himself and Daniel as children. His father, who worked for the Military Corps of Engineers, traveled to his assignments with his family, exposing Philippe to different cultures, notably in the Philippines and in Thailand. These early experiences made him tolerant of cultural differences, on the one hand, and fiercely independent, on the other.

Philippe entered our lives after he joined the Fellowship of Friends in Portland in August of 1975, when he was just nineteen years old. He was later a member of centers in Carmel, San Francisco, Sacramento, Washington, D.C., and Paris until the late-1990s.

In the early years of the immune deficiency pandemic Philippe had a major health shock. The resulting complications were a large source of suffering. For his entire life he accepted HIV as a constant opportunity to work and to transform it. Having worked in a hospital at one point, he could not accept the doctor’s judgments without question, which increased the difficulty of his condition. At a certain point, he was asked to take a medical leave of absence from the school.

During his leave of absence, Philippe had a deep longing to return. His valuation for Robert, the school, and his friendships remained firm then, and for the rest of his life. During this time, he often observed that, through Robert’s teaching, he had learned to make the arts a part of his life. He had a special love for Rainer Maria Rilke, so much so that he made pilgrimages to the places where Rilke had lived. He could quote long passages of the “Duino Elegies” by heart.

In 2008, he rejoined the school in the Paris Center, and lived briefly at Apollo before moving to Tours, in the Loire Valley in France. There he lived with his mother, caring for her faithfully for the remainder of her days.

Philippe and his mother had a very special bond. From her, he inherited a wonderful sense of humor and a mischievous way of shocking people. He often found ways to insert her stories into a conversation and share anecdotes about her and his grandmother.

Philippe moved back to Paris after his mother died in 2015. He would often invite students to fine dinners in very good Parisian restaurants. He was a *bon vivant* in the full sense of the term. In France, he had worked in a wine store, which had broadened his knowledge of fine wines. He was also a good chef and, as such, was often recruited to prepare meals for center events.

He used appreciation of fine dining to bring students together in a refined atmosphere. He was a true gentleman, and had a natural courtesy and enjoyment of formalities that make for a refined life. Perhaps surprisingly, he was also a competent and knowledgeable handyman, who could do plumbing and electrical work as needed in teaching houses, students' homes, and the apartments in which he lived.

When traveling between the United States and Europe, he followed his mother's preference of sailing rather than flying. In the spirit of sharing what he loved, he invited friends to accompany him on the Queen Mary II between England and New York.

Philippe was a thoughtful and generous friend. He would follow up conversations by sending a beautiful book, like *Plutarch's Lives* or the *Essays* of Montaigne. A friend recounted that every room in her house held gifts from Philippe: an apron from the Wallace Collection, Diorissimo cologne, a Hermes scarf, a cashmere cape, a shawl, earrings, and books.

Philippe was a member of the Carmel center at the same time as Francis Kalnay, a remarkable Hungarian author, and the only student in the Fellowship who had met Gurdjieff, back in the 1920s in Paris and New York. The two men were close friends who enjoyed cooking together and sharing a lovely dinner and a glass or two of wine. Philippe arranged to have a tribute published to honor Francis after his death, garnered from interviews with various students who had known him. This publication allowed many students who had never met Francis to know him.

Philippe developed a deep love for Turkey and visited there as often as he could until Covid made travel difficult. With each visit, he sent gifts, like Turkish towels and carpets, to his friends. Traveling was an essential part of his life and the restrictions during the Covid pandemic did not prevent him from "traveling" the world virtually from his living room, visiting cities, churches, museums, mosques, and châteaux on the Loire as well as places where he had lived as a child. He passed on his online discoveries to students for the school's benefit, in a spirit of always sharing the good that he had found.

When reminded of his capers in his earlier years, he was humble and grateful to be in the school. When his mechanics were challenged, he would say, "Well, overcoming features is always worthwhile" with a twinkle in his eye and a wry smile.

Though his role was not an easy one, he truly gave all he had to hold on to the work, the school, and his connection with the Teacher and with his dear friends and family. Philippe deeply appreciated Robert's thought: "One's faith is the result of one's verifications," and he would add, "Yes, and one's fate is the result of one's verifications." He valued the school with his life.

Philippe completed his task at 5:55 a.m. (Paris time), on November 20, 2021. As he lay dying, he was accompanied throughout his last night by a friend, who held his hand, read poetry, and hummed vaguely remembered Bach melodies. In the early dawn birds were singing outside his room.

Robert's last message to Philippe: *"Everything is all right and Robert sends his love and thanks for playing your role well. Hard was thy part and unto presence it was enacted."*

[**Music:** Pachelbel, "Canon in D"]  
(**Musician:** Zeno)

**[Minister's Conclusion:]**

The death of a friend reminds us of the fragile and temporary nature of our lives, and increases our love and gratitude for one another.

May Philippe's deep appreciation of refinement and culture help us to be present to the best that our lives can offer us;

May his valuation and care for his teacher, his friends, and his family inspire us; and

May his gallant efforts to overcome illness and isolation encourage us in transforming our own suffering.

The task of this lifetime has been fulfilled. The role of Philippe McGuire is complete, and the soul that played the role is released to continue its divine journey.

Dear Philippe, we thank thee.

**[Minister leads participants to the gravesite.]**

**[Minister:]**

We return Philippe's ashes to the ground: from earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Words fade in the face of a great reality. We, too, arrive at this simplest of moments—our friend, Philippe, showing us how.

**[Minister motions to the urn bearer, Gernot. The urn bearer kneels before the grave and places the urn inside.]**

Let us offer these rose petals in memory of our departed friend.

**[Minister scatters rose petals.]**

The earth returns to the earth, and a divine spark returns to its divine source. The circle of life is complete.

Let us join in raising a glass to Philippe, and then depart, with a renewed and vivid appreciation for the gift of life allotted to each of us.

**[Participants scatter rose petals and then move to the table for the toast.]**

**[Toast: Francoise R]**

Let us celebrate the many moments we were given to share joy with Philippe, and may his love of friendship and art remain with us and inspire us to live our lives ever more happily.