



A Guide to preparing for a funeral at Church

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Introduction

Losing a loved one can often be a traumatic experience. As well as dealing with grief and loss, there are lots of practical things to be sorted out. This file aims to help you think about the arrangements for the funeral service in preparation for meeting with the priest to decide on the contents of the funeral service.

Each section of the file looks at a particular aspect of the service and helps you to think what would be most suitable for you and the deceased. You can also visit <https://churchofenglandfunerals.org/> for guidance and support for a funeral in church.

Please be assured of our prayers and our support for you at this time. If there is any further help you need at this time, contact details can be found on page 14.

Service outline for a service at Church

Music to come into (optional)

Either played by the organist or on CD

The Gathering

Words from the bible are read as the coffin comes into Church

Welcome

Opening Prayer

Hymn/song (optional)

Tribute/Eulogy

Either by friends/family or by the vicar on behalf of the family

Bible Reading

Additional Readings (optional)

Sermon

Prayers

For the deceased and for the family, finishing with the Lords Prayer

Hymn/song (optional)

Commendation

The deceased is commended into Gods care

Notices

Invitation to the wake (optional)

Remind people about a collection for charity (optional)

Committal

This will either take place at the crematorium if the body is being cremated or at the graveside if the bodied is being buried

Closing Prayer

Blessing

Music to leave by (optional)

Either played by the organist or on CD

Bible Readings

There is normally a bible reading from the psalms or the New Testament. Have a read through the potential bible readings to see which one you would like.

Psalms

Psalm 23

1 The Lord is my shepherd;
therefore can I lack nothing.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures
and leads me beside still waters.

3 He shall refresh my soul
and guide me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

4 Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

5 You spread a table before me in the presence of those who trouble me;
you have anointed my head with oil and my cup shall be full.

6 Surely goodness and loving mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Psalm 121

- ¹ I lift up my eyes to the mountains—
where does my help come from?
- ² My help comes from the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.
- ³ He will not let your foot slip—
he who watches over you will not slumber;
- ⁴ indeed, he who watches over Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.
- ⁵ The LORD watches over you—
the LORD is your shade at your right hand;
- ⁶ the sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon by night.
- ⁷ The LORD will keep you from all harm—
he will watch over your life;
- ⁸ the LORD will watch over your coming and going
both now and forevermore.

Psalm 130

¹ Out of the depths I cry to you, LORD;

² Lord, hear my voice.

Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.

³ If you, LORD, kept a record of sins,
Lord, who could stand?

⁴ But with you there is forgiveness,
so that we can, with reverence, serve you.

⁵ I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits,
and in his word I put my hope.

⁶ I wait for the Lord
more than watchmen wait for the morning,
more than watchmen wait for the morning.

⁷ Israel, put your hope in the LORD,
for with the LORD is unfailing love
and with him is full redemption.

⁸ He himself will redeem Israel
from all their sins.

Psalm 6

- ¹ LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger
or discipline me in your wrath.
- ² Have mercy on me, LORD, for I am faint;
heal me, LORD, for my bones are in agony.
- ³ My soul is in deep anguish.
How long, LORD, how long?
- ⁴ Turn, LORD, and deliver me;
save me because of your unfailing love.
- ⁵ Among the dead no one proclaims your name.
Who praises you from the grave?
- ⁶ I am worn out from my groaning.
All night long I flood my bed with weeping
and drench my couch with tears.
- ⁷ My eyes grow weak with sorrow;
they fail because of all my foes.
- ⁸ Away from me, all you who do evil,
for the LORD has heard my weeping.
- ⁹ The LORD has heard my cry for mercy;
the LORD accepts my prayer.
- ¹⁰ All my enemies will be overwhelmed with shame and anguish;
they will turn back and suddenly be put to shame.

New Testament Readings

John 6.35-40

Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away; for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day.'

John 11.17-27

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?' She said to him, 'Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.'

John 14.1-6

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.' Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?' Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'

Romans 8.31-end

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, 'For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Revelation 21.1-7

I, John, saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.' And the one who was seated on the throne said, 'See, I am making all things new.' Also he said, 'Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.' Then he said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children.'

Additional Readings (Non bible readings)

As well as a bible reading you may like to have a poem or other additional reading, this is not compulsory, but is an option. There is a selection here for ideas, but feel free to use your own

Footprints

One night I dreamed a dream.

I was walking along the beach with my Lord. Across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life. For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand, one belonging to me and one to my Lord. When the last scene of my life shot before me I looked back at the footprints in the sand. There was only one set of footprints. I realized that this was at the lowest and saddest times of my life. This always bothered me and I questioned the Lord about my dilemma.

"Lord, You told me when I decided to follow You, You would walk and talk with me all the way. But I'm aware that during the most troublesome times of my life there is only one set of footprints. I just don't understand why, when I need You most, You leave me."

He whispered, "My precious child, I love you and will never leave you, never, ever, during your trials and testings. When you saw only one set of footprints, It was then that I carried you."

Margaret Fishback Powers, 1964

The Prayer of John Donne (1573-1631)

Bring us, O Lord God, at our last awakening
into the house and gate of Heaven,
to enter into that gate
and dwell in that house, where there shall be
no darkness nor dazzling, but one equal light;
no noise nor silence, but one equal music;
no fears or hopes, but one equal possession;
no ends or beginnings, but one equal eternity,
in the habitations of thy glory and dominion,
world without end.

Amen

“You can shed tears that I have gone”

“You can shed tears that she is gone,
or you can smile because she has lived.
You can close your eyes and pray that she'll come back,
or you can open your eyes and see all she's left.
Your heart can be empty because you can't see her,
or you can be full of the love you shared.
You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday,
or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday.
You can remember her only that she is gone,
or you can cherish her memory and let it live on.
You can cry and close your mind,
be empty and turn your back.
Or you can do what she'd want:
smile, open your eyes, love and go on.”

David Harkins b.1958

Do not stand at my grave and weep
I am not there. I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow.
I am the diamond glints on snow.
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.
I am the gentle autumn rain.
When you awaken in the morning's hush
I am the swift uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circled flight.
I am the soft stars that shine at night.
Do not stand at my grave and cry;
I am not there. I did not die.

[Mary Elizabeth Frye](#)

On Giving

Then said a rich man, "Speak to us of Giving." And he answered:
You give but little when you give of your possessions.
It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.

There are those who give little of the much which they have - and they give it for recognition and their hidden desire makes their gifts unwholesome.

And there are those who have little and give it all.
These are the believers in life and the bounty of life, and their coffer is never empty.

There are those who give with joy, and that joy is their reward.
And there are those who give with pain, and that pain is their baptism.
And there are those who give and know not pain in giving, nor do they seek joy, nor give with
mindfulness of virtue;
They give as in yonder valley the myrtle breathes its fragrance into space.
Though the hands of such as these God speaks, and from behind their eyes He smiles upon the
earth.

It is well to give when asked, but it is better to give unasked, through understanding;
And to the open-handed the search for one who shall receive is joy greater than giving
And is there aught you would withhold?

Kahlil Gibran

Eulogy/tribute

As part of the service there is usually some words said by way of tribute about the deceased. This can be said by a family member or friend, or by the vicar on behalf of the family. What is said is up to the family to choose, often it can include something about the person's life, their family, places they worked, what they were like as a person. There is no set length for the eulogy, but around 500-600 words is suitable.

Prayers

Prayer is a vital part of the Christian faith and as the family of the deceased you will have been prayed for at church on the Sunday before the service, and again on the Sunday following the funeral service. Prayers will also be said at the funeral itself. You may want to think about who are the key family members or friends for whom it would be good to be prayed for by name.

Order of Service

An option that the family can choose is to have a printed service of order for the funeral service. This can include things such as a photograph of the deceased, the titles of the music for entering and leaving the chapel and the words of the Lord's prayer. If this is something you would like please speak to the funeral directors and mention it to the vicar when you meet with them.

Hymns

When thinking about hymns it is good to choose ones that most people will know. Below is a list of hymns that people have chosen in the past, you could pick from this list or they may be others which are known to you, or have particular meaning for you.

Abide with me
Guide Me O thou Great Jehovah
The Lord's my Shepherd
King of love
In heavenly love
Praise my soul the king of heaven
Dear Lord and Father of Mankind
Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise
Thine be the glory

Music

You can choose to have music played either on CD or on the organ as you come into the church building and as you leave the church building. There is no set music, but listed below are examples of music people have used.

Going in

CD

'The Four Seasons - Spring' – Vivaldi
'I'll walk with God' – Mario Lanza

Organ

Abide with me
Nimrod from Enigma variations by Elgar
Largo from Xeres- Handle
Pie Jesu – Faure's Requiem
Be still my Soul (Finlandia) - Jean Sibelius
Jesu loy of man's desiring - Bach
Priere a notre dame from Gothic Suite by Boellmann

Going out

CD

'Forever Young – Rod Stewart
'We'll Meet Again' – Vera Lynn

Organ

Thine be the glory
Nimrod from Enigma variations by Elgar
O rest in the Lord – Mendelssohn's Elijah

Contact details

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Church Service Times

St Chad's Sutton Coldfield

8am	Holy Communion
10.30am	Holy Communion
6.30pm	Evening Prayer