

## FUNERALS

A funeral has a dual focus: on the dead person and on our own hope of eternal life. It should also take account of the mourners' own profound sense of grief and loss.

For the dead person, a funeral is an appropriate memorial and thanksgiving, indicated in the final commendation of the soul to the peace of God and the recognition of our own hopes and longings for eternal life in Christ.

For the bereaved, a funeral is equally important as a means of saying farewell to someone we have loved and with whom we have shared much. This is as true for children as for adults; being open and honest with children and allowing them to attend a funeral if they wish is a means of supporting a child as he or she negotiates the way through the process of grieving.

All the principal Christian denominations in Great Britain have funeral services with elements in common, and there is nothing to prevent anyone from drawing on more than one tradition in compiling a service.

Some people might find it helpful:

- to have the coffin in the home prior to the funeral;
- to have the coffin taken to the church the night before the funeral, with a service there to receive it;
- to have a memorial book at such a service/at the funeral in which names and addresses of those present can be entered. (Some undertakers leave cards in the pews for this purpose.) The existence of such a book needs to be brought to the congregation's attention at the end of the service.
- to work out the funeral service for themselves as part of the process of grieving and in recognition of their responsibilities;
- to remember the role of secular readings as well as Biblical ones;
- to bear in mind that music brings in a powerful personal element irrespective of its source (this may be particularly important if children are involved), and that family members or friends might appreciate being asked to play an instrument or sing at the service;
- to consider inviting friends/relatives to take a speaking part in the service (with an alternative person in the background in case the invited participant is overcome by emotion);
- to plan some form of reception, even if very simple, to follow the funeral to meet the need for people to talk through what has happened (at home, in a church hall, etc.);
- to use the form in this pack for pre-planning a funeral (copies could be lodged in parish records as well as kept on file at home – don't forget to tell people where to find the form);
- to consider the possibility of a memorial service (with or without a eucharist), held at a time when friends and relatives who might not be able to have time off work for a funeral would be able to come;
- to create after the funeral a personal anthology, including helpful prayers, poems and quotations sent by family and friends, perhaps extending to a photographic record of a life, with comments.



*'You live in your marriage the hopes and difficulties of the path to Christian Unity.'* Pope John Paul II, York 1982

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