

With you at every step

Wherever you choose to have a funeral, it will reflect the unique life of the person you knew. Whatever will help to make the funeral special – music, hymns, readings, tributes, even the type of coffin – can be part of a Church of England funeral. Talk to your minister about what is possible. We're with you every step of the way.

The arrival

When everyone has arrived at the funeral venue, the coffin will be carried by the pall-bearers, (who could be family or friends), into the building or onto the burial site, depending on where the funeral is to take place.

If the funeral is in a crematorium or in a church, music can be played as the coffin is carried in. You may prefer no music, and that is fine too.

Some funerals taking place outdoors have included live music at this point, such as a flautist or trumpeter, to accompany the coffin to the graveside. But it's also fine to have no music at all. The minister may also say some words of comfort and hope as the coffin is being carried.

Music

When everyone is gathered, a hymn may be sung. It is fine if you don't want any hymns, but if you do, here are some popular choices for funerals:

Music for adults

- Abide with me
- All things bright and beautiful
- Amazing grace
- Be still for the presence of the Lord
- Dear Lord and Father
- For the beauty of the earth
- Great is thy faithfulness
- The Lord is my shepherd
- Jerusalem
- Lead us heavenly Father lead us
- Lord of all hopefulness
- Lord of the dance
- Love divine all loves excelling
- Make me a channel of Your peace

Old rugged cross

- The day thou gavest
- The king of love my shepherd is

Music for children

- Christ beside me
- Thank you for the gifts we treasure
- There is a place

Abide with me

Abide with me, fast falls the eventide
The darkness deepens Lord, with me abide
When other helpers fail and comforts flee
Help of the helpless, oh, abide with me

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away
Change and decay in all around I see
O Thou who changest not, abide with me

I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness
Where is death's sting?
Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me

Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee
In life, in death, o Lord, abide with me
Abide with me, abide with me

All things bright and beautiful

*All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful:
The Lord God made them all.*

Each little flow'r that opens,
Each little bird that sings,
He made their glowing colors,
He made their tiny wings.

The purple-headed mountains,
The river running by,
The sunset and the morning
That brightens up the sky.

The cold wind in the winter,
The pleasant summer sun,
The ripe fruits in the garden,
He made them every one.

The tall trees in the greenwood,
The meadows where we play,
The rushes by the water,
To gather every day.

He gave us eyes to see them,
And lips that we might tell
How great is God Almighty,
Who has made all things well.

Amazing Grace

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound

That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,
His Word my hope secures;
He will my Shield and Portion be,
As long as life endures.

Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess, within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine;
But God, who called me here below,
Will be forever mine.

When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we'd first begun.

Be still for the presence of the Lord

Be still, for the presence of the Lord,
The Holy One is here;
Come bow before Him now
With reverence and fear.
In Him no sin is found,

We stand on holy ground
Be still, for the presence of the Lord,
The Holy One is here.

Be still, for the glory of the Lord
Is shining all around
He burns with holy fire,
With splendour He is crowned.
How awesome is the sight,
Our radiant King of light!
Be still, for the glory of the Lord
Is shining all around.

Be still, for the power of the Lord
Is moving in this place
He comes to cleanse and heal,
To minister His grace.
No work too hard for Him,
In faith receive from Him
Be still, for the power of the Lord
Is moving in this place.

Dear Lord and Father

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
forgive our foolish ways!
Re-clothe us in our rightful mind,
in purer lives thy service find,
in deeper reverence, praise;
in deeper reverence, praise.

In simple trust like theirs who heard,
beside the Syrian sea,
the gracious calling of the Lord,
let us, like them, without a word,
rise up and follow thee;
rise up and follow thee.

O Sabbath rest by Galilee!
O calm of hills above,

where Jesus knelt to share with thee
the silence of eternity
interpreted by love!
interpreted by love!

Drop thy still dews of quietness,
till all our strivings cease;
take from our souls the strain and stress,
and let our ordered lives confess
the beauty of thy peace;
the beauty of thy peace.

Breathe through the heats of our desire
thy coolness and thy balm;
let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still, small voice of calm;
O still, small voice of calm.

For the beauty of the earth

For the beauty of the earth,
For the beauty of the skies,
For the love which from our birth
Over and around us lies,
Lord of all, to thee we raise
This our grateful hymn of praise.

For the beauty of each hour
Of the day and of the night,
Hill and vale, and tree and flower,
Sun and moon and stars of light,
Lord of all, to thee we raise

This our grateful hymn of praise.

For the joy of human love,
Brother, sister, parent, child,
Friends on earth, and friends above,
Pleasures pure and undefiled,
Lord of all, to thee we raise
This our grateful hymn of praise.

For each perfect gift of thine,
To our race so freely given,
Graces human and divine,
Flowers of earth and buds of heaven,
Lord of all, to thee we raise
This our grateful hymn of praise.

For thy Church which evermore
Lifteth holy hands above,
Offering up on every shore
Her pure sacrifice of love,
Lord of all, to thee we raise
This our grateful hymn of praise.

Great is thy faithfulness

“Great is Thy faithfulness,” O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

*“Great is Thy faithfulness!” “Great is Thy faithfulness!”
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided—
“Great is Thy faithfulness,” Lord, unto me!*

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.
Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;

Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Jerusalem

And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountain green?
And was the holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen?
And did the countenance divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among those dark satanic mills?

Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!
I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.

Lead us Heavenly Father, lead us

Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us
o'er the world's tempestuous sea;
guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us,
for we have no help but thee;
yet possessing every blessing,
if our God our Father be.

Savior, breathe forgiveness o'er us;
all our weakness thou dost know;

thou didst tread this earth before us;
thou didst feel its keenest woe;
yet unfearing, persevering,
to thy passion thou didst go.

Spirit of our God, descending,
fill our hearts with heavenly joy;
love with every passion blending
pleasure that can never cloy;
thus provided, pardoned, guided,
nothing can our peace destroy.

Lord of all hopefulness

Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy,
Whose trust, ever child-like, no cares can destroy,
Be there at our waking, and give us, we pray,
Your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break of the day.

Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith,
Whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and the lathe,
Be there at our labours, and give us, we pray,
Your strength in our hearts, Lord, at the noon of the day.

Lord of all kindliness, Lord of all grace,
Your hands swift to welcome, your arms to embrace,
Be there at our homing, and give us, we pray,
Your love in our hearts, Lord, at the eve of the day.

Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm,
Whose voice is contentment, whose presence is balm,
Be there at our sleeping, and give us, we pray,
Your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the day.

Love divine, all loves excelling

Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heaven, to earth come down;
fix in us thy humble dwelling;
all thy faithful mercies crown!
Jesus thou art all compassion,
pure, unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation;
enter every trembling heart.

Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit
into every troubled breast!
Let us all in thee inherit;
let us find that second rest.
Take away our bent to sinning;
Alpha and Omega be;
end of faith, as its beginning,
set our hearts at liberty.

Come, Almighty to deliver,
let us all thy life receive;
suddenly return and never,
nevermore thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray and praise thee without ceasing,
glory in thy perfect love.

Finish, then, thy new creation;
pure and spotless let us be.
Let us see thy great salvation
perfectly restored in thee;
changed from glory into glory,
till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love, and praise.

Make me a channel of Your peace

Make me a channel of your peace,
Where there is hatred, let me bring Your love,
Where there is injury, Your pardon Lord,
And where there's doubt, true faith in You

Make me a channel of your peace,
Where there's despair in life let me bring hope,
Where there is darkness - only light,
And where there's sadness, ever joy

Oh Master, grant that I may never seek,
So much to be consoled as to console,
To be understood, as to understand,
To be loved, as to love with all my soul

Make me a channel of your peace,
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
In giving to all men that we receive,
And in dying that we're born to eternal life

Oh Master, grant that I may never seek,
So much to be consoled as to console,
To be understood, as to understand,
To be loved, as to love with all my soul

Make me a channel of your peace,
Where there is hatred, let me bring Your love,
Where there is injury, Your pardon Lord,
And where there's doubt, true faith in You

The day Thou gavest

The day Thou gavest, Lord, is ended,

The darkness falls at Thy behest;
To Thee our morning hymns ascended,
Thy praise shall sanctify our rest.

We thank Thee that Thy church, unsleeping,
While earth rolls onward into light,
Through all the world her watch is keeping,
And rests not now by day or night.

As o'er each continent and island
The dawn leads on another day,
The voice of prayer is never silent,
Nor dies the strain of praise away.

The sun that bids us rest is waking
Our brethren 'neath the western sky,
And hour by hour fresh lips are making
Thy wondrous doings heard on high.

So be it, Lord; Thy throne shall never,
Like earth's proud empires, pass away:
Thy kingdom stands, and grows forever,
Till all Thy creatures own Thy sway.

The King of love my shepherd is

The King of love my shepherd is,
Whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am his
And he is mine forever.

Where streams of living water flow,
My ransomed soul he leadeth
And, where the verdant pastures grow,
With food celestial feedeth.

Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,
But yet in love he sought me
And on his shoulder gently laid
And home rejoicing brought me.

In death's dark vale I fear no ill
With thee, dear Lord, beside me,
Thy rod and staff my comfort still,
Thy cross before to guide me.

Thou spreadst a table in my sight;
Thine unction grace bestoweth;
And, oh, what transport of delight
From thy pure chalice floweth!

And so through all the length of days
Thy goodness faileth never.
Good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise
Within thy house forever.

The Lord's my shepherd

The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want;
He makes me down to lie
In pastures green; He leadeth me
The quiet waters by.

My soul He doth restore again,
And me to walk doth make
Within the paths of righteousness,
E'en for His own name's sake.

Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale,
Yet will I fear no ill;
For Thou art with me, and Thy rod
And staff me comfort still.

My table Thou hast furnished
In presence of my foes;
My head Thou dost with oil anoint,
And my cup overflows.

Goodness and mercy all my life
Shall surely follow me,
And in God's house forevermore
My dwelling-place shall be.

There is a place

There is a place prepared for little children
Those we once lived for, those we deeply mourn,
Those who from play, from learning and from laughter
Cruelly were torn.

There is a place where hands which held ours tightly
Now are released beyond all hurt and fear
Healed by that love which also feels our sorrow
Tear after tear.

There is a place where all the lost potential
Yields its full promise, finds its lost intent;
Silenced no more, young voices echo freely
As they were meant.

There is a place where God will hear our questions,
Suffer our anger, share our speechless grief.
Gently repair the innocence of loving
And of belief.

Jesus, who bids us to be like little children
Shields those our arms are yearning to embrace,
God will ensure that all are reunited;
There is a place.

The old rugged cross

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross,
The emblem of suffering and shame;
And I love that old cross where the Dearest and Best
For a world of lost sinners was slain.

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,

*Till my trophies at last I lay down;
I will cling to the old rugged cross,
And exchange it someday for a crown.*

Oh, that old rugged cross, so despised by the world,
Has a wondrous attraction for me;
For the dear Lamb of God left His glory above
To bear it to dark Calvary.

In that old rugged cross, stained with blood so divine,
A wondrous beauty I see,
For 'twas on that old cross Jesus suffered and died,
To pardon and sanctify me.

To the old rugged cross I will ever be true;
Its shame and reproach gladly bear;
Then He'll call me someday to my home far away,
Where His glory forever I'll share.

Remembering a unique life

After the hymn, there is time to listen to the story of the person you knew and loved. You, another friend or relative, or the church minister can do this.

It may include reading and/or music which reflect the character or interests of the person who has died. There are popular readings for funerals given on the right - just click on the readings to see more.

The Ship

I am standing on the seashore, a ship sails in the morning breeze and starts for the ocean.

She is an object of beauty and I stand watching her till at last she fades on the horizon and someone at my side says: "She is gone."

Gone!

Where

Gone from my sight that is all.

She is just as large in the masts, hull and spars as she was when I saw her, and just as able to bear her load of living freight to its destination.

The diminished size and total loss of sight is in me, not in her, and just at the moment when someone at my side says,

"She is gone"

there are others who are watching her coming, and other voices take up a glad shout:

"There she comes!"

and that is dying.

Bishop Brent

Remember me

Remember me when I am gone away,

gone far away into the silent land;

when you can no more hold me by the hand,

nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.
Remember me when no more day by day
you tell me of our future that you planned:
only remember me; you understand
it will be too late to counsel then or pray.
Yet if you should forget me for a while
and afterwards remember, do not grieve:
for if the darkness and corruption leave
a vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
better by far that you should forget and smile
than that you should remember and be sad.

Christina Rosetti

Crossing the bar

Sunset and evening star;
and one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
when I put out to sea.

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
too full for sound and foam,
when that which drew from out the boundless deep
turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,
and after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness or farewell,
when I embark.

For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place
the flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
when I have crost the bar.

Alfred Lord Tennyson

If I should go

If I should die before the rest of you,
break not a flower nor inscribe a stone,
nor, when I'm gone, speak in a Sunday voice,
but be the usual selves that I have known.
Weep if you must: parting is hell.
But life goes on.
So sing as well.

Joyce Grenfell

A message of hope

You can choose the Bible reading for this part of the service if you would like to. Some popular choices are offered on the right.

The minister will speak about God's promises - of the hope that death is not the end.

Whatever your beliefs, hearing these words can bring a sense of hope and comfort, even at this very difficult time.

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John 14.1 - 6, 27

‘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.

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

Revelation 21.1 - 7

The New Heaven and the New Earth

Then I 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.

1 Corinthians 13

The Gift of Love

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths
for his name’s sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—
they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long.

Ecclesiastes 3.1 - 8

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;
a time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build up;
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
a time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to throw away;
a time to tear, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
a time to love, and a time to hate;
a time for war, and a time for peace.

Psalm 139

O LORD, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
O LORD, you know it completely.
You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.

Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.
If I take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.
If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night',
even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you.

For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well.
My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.
In your book were written
all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them as yet existed.
How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!
I try to count them—they are more than the sand;
I come to the end—I am still with you

Reflecting and remembering

In a time of reflection, music can be played, or silence may be kept. Prayers will be said too.

At this point, it might be appropriate to lay flowers on the coffin or express your sadness and loss in another way. Some families choose a cardboard coffin so that messages and pictures can be drawn on it. Perhaps a poem or a reading may be just right.

Talk to your minister about any ideas you might have. Tell them all about the person you knew and loved and they can offer suggestions for special ways to make it personal.

In your order of service, there may also be time for another hymn, if you'd like that. Talk to your minister about how much time you'll have, especially if the funeral is taking place at a crematorium.

Saying goodbye

It will then be time for the farewell. The minister will pray, asking God to keep your loved one in his care, using words that have been used for centuries:

"...earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust: in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ"

This may be a very emotional moment. It may be possible to have some special music played at this point.

The minister will say a blessing and music may be played as the mourners leave the venue.

A moment with God

There's so much to think about when organising a funeral, but God is with you and your church will help you through it. If you'd like to take a moment to pray, you can light a candle here online to help you do that.

Yes, I'd like to light a candle

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We're with you every step of the way.

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