

Funeral

Rites

Abbreviated for use during the COVID-19 outbreak

Notes

During the coronavirus outbreak, funerals must be conducted with certain severe constraints, whether the death is linked to COVID-19 or not.

Pastoral care of the dying and bereaved is restricted by the rules of social distancing. The assurances offered through personal contact with a priest, including the possibility of Confession and Absolution, and of Viaticum, are no longer available. Such prayers and counsel as are possible must be communicated by telephone.

It is not permitted for funerals to take place in church buildings. Therefore, Reception of the Body into the Church, and celebration of the Eucharist, are not possible. Funeral services are taking place either at the graveside or at a crematorium. The numbers allowed to attend the funeral are restricted and social distancing is being enforced. These are all factors that we need to recognise will add to the trauma of the bereaved — factors which, alas, clergy can do little to mitigate.

Inclement weather may impose time constraints on outdoor funerals. The rigid schedules to which crematoria adhere, combined with additional hygiene measures between funerals, may reduce the period for which the chapel is available. We should also bear in mind that fear of infection among the mourners may give rise to discomfort: this could be eased by the prompt conduct of the service.

The Commemoration of All Souls this year may provide the opportunity for the special remembering in a congregation of those who have died during the period of restriction. Clergy could also talk to families about the possibilities of a future memorial service or 'Requiem', when church buildings are re-opened for public worship, and freedom of movement and assembly are restored. For the present, we shall have to explain that eulogies, recitation of poetry, or musical presentations by family and friends, will probably not be possible at funeral services, but could be included in later memorial services.

At a very practical level, clergy should also expect crematorium vestries to be closed — either come robed or robe at the back of the chapel.

The rite which follows, which is abbreviated from *Funeral Rites 1987*, is offered to help clergy conduct funerals with dignity in circumstances where time is limited.

The text of four scriptural readings is provided in the rite. The full list of suggested readings is to be found in *Funeral Rites 1987*, p. 21.

Funeral Rites

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Sentences

As required for the procession and laying the coffin on the bier.

Jesus said, '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.'

(John 11. 25f)

We brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it.

(1 Timothy 6. 7)

The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away;
blessed be the name of the Lord.

(Job 1. 21)

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,
so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life.

(John 3. 16)

What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived,
what God has prepared for those who love him –
these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit;
for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

(1 Corinthians 2. 9–10)

Since we believe that Jesus died and rose again,
even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. Therefore
encourage one another with these words.

(1 Thessalonians 4. 14,18)

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,
his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning.

(Lamentations 3. 22–23)

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

(Matthew 5. 4)

Introduction

These or other suitable words may be used.

We have gathered to commend our *brother/sister N.* to God's loving care, to give thanks for *his/her* life, and to comfort one another in our grief. We do this at a time when our nation and communities are in crisis, and loved ones have not been able to gather to grieve or to share precious memories. We nonetheless gather now, to commit *N.s* body to be *buried/cremated*, in this act of Christian worship that gives expression to our faith and affirms our hope of resurrection to life in God's eternal presence.

Collect

God our maker,
your creative will gives life to all that is:
your quickening power brings us to birth
and raises us from death.
Take this your *son/daughter N.* into your keeping
and give *him/her* the new life
that is promised in Jesus Christ our Lord,
who once was dead and lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
now and for ever.

Amen.

The Liturgy of the Word

Scriptural reading

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

(Romans 6. 3–8)

Or

Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this

mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.

(1 *Corinthians* 15.51–58)

Or

Jesus said, "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* 6.37–40)

Or

Jesus said, "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."

(*John* 14.1–6)

Sermon

A brief affirmation of the Christian hope by the officiant.

Intercession

Prayer for the Mourners

God of the living and the dead,
when you raised Jesus from the tomb
you gave new hope to his desolate disciples.
Cleanse, restore and heal us in our time of sorrow.
May we go forward in his strength upon our pilgrimage,
sharing the fellowship of the redeemed,
both living and departed.

Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

Prayer of Faith

Father,
you are from everlasting,
your compassion knows no bounds:
Though we are dust and to dust shall return,
we trust in your power to fashion us anew
in the likeness of your Son, who endured the cross
to become the firstborn in your new creation;
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
now and for ever.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour has taught us,
so we pray:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Do not bring us
to the time of trial
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom,
the power and the glory are
yours, now and for ever.
Amen.**

As our Saviour Christ has commanded
and taught us, we are bold to say:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.**

THE COMMENDATION

Father,
we commend to your care our *brother/sister N.*,
giving thanks for all that *he/she* brought us.
Though now taken from us,
let *him/her* not be parted from you.
May your servant, set free from the bondage of earth,
be changed into your likeness, from glory to glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Give rest, O Christ, to your servant with your saints:
where sorrow and pain are no more;
neither sighing, but life everlasting. **Amen.**

Go forth upon your journey from this world,
dear child of God,
into the hands of the Father who made you,
to find life in Christ who redeemed you,
to rejoice in the Spirit who renews you.
May the heavenly host sustain you
and the company of the redeemed enfold you;
may peace be yours this day,
and the heavenly city your home.

THE COMMITTAL

At a burial:

We have entrusted
our *brother/sister N.*
to God's merciful keeping;
we now commit *his/her* body
to the ground,
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,
who died, was buried
and rose again for us.
To him be glory for ever and ever.

Amen.

At a cremation:

We have entrusted
our *brother/sister N.*
To God's merciful keeping;
we now commit *his/her* body
to the fire,
ashes to ashes,
dust to dust;
in sure and certain hope
of the resurrection
to eternal life
through our Lord Jesus Christ,
who died, was buried
and rose again for us.
To him be glory for ever and ever.

Amen.

Now to him who is able to keep you from falling, and to make you stand without blemish in the presence of his glory with rejoicing, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority, before all time and now and for ever.

(Jude 24, 25)

Amen.