

The Final Kindness.



Resources for Funeral Celebrants.

Waikato - Waīariki Synod Educational Group.

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Checklist for Friends & Family.

MUSIC:

- Hymn or song for everyone to sing
- Musical item - eg. solo
- Music played as people gather - and as we leave the chapel

READINGS:

- Special thoughts or writings
- Poems
- Words from Scripture

PRAYERS:

- Of acknowledgement and of thanks
- Lord's Prayer - which version

TRIBUTE/LIFE STORY: How this is done is your choice

- Family time... friends...
- Do you wish to open it up for others to pay a tribute
- Power point

ANY SPECIAL FEATURES:

- Perhaps a photo on the casket... candles...
- Or some special memento

BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE: For people to sign

REFRESHMENTS after the service:

- Where?
- Who will serve?
-

PRINTED SERVICE SHEET:

- With photo... wording?
- How many copies? (June Higham.)

Simple Unveiling Service

“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 weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance”.

Welcome everyone to this service where we come to unveil the headstone of ...

It's been ... *months/years* since you last gathered as friends and family for ... 's funeral. The time since then has been one of sadness, of memories and

of storytelling, of living with a sense of loss, of supporting each other and of gradually coming to a place of acceptance and healing.

Today we come to acknowledge another milestone on the hard journey of grief. We come knowing that ... is with us still in heart and in memory, and that *his/her* spirit will never leave us alone.

Let us pray -

Gracious God, we come today to remember ...
and to give thanks again for the gift of *his/her* life,
for the years we shared with *him/her*,
the good we saw in *him/her*,
and the love we received from *him/her*.
We thank you that *he/she* is
at rest in your loving care,
and trust in your promise of life without end, **Amen.**

Reading

Memories

Opportunity for other speakers

A hymn may be sung

Let us pray -

Gracious God, when memories are sad and painful,
hold us gently in your hand;
when memories are sweet and joyful,
give us grace to thank you.

In the faith of Jesus Christ,
we dedicate this headstone in memory
of his servant ... in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the
Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Now may healing flow from sorrow,
hope emerge from darkness,
and memories become even more precious
so that past, present and future
may be as one in the mystery of God's love. **Amen.**

Hymn

Grace (together)

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the
fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.**

(An Unveiling Service may also be found in *A New Zealand Prayer
Book*, pp881-84)

FUNERAL SERVICE

Contents

I. Gathering and Opening

1.1 Welcome

1.2 Gathering

1.3 Opening sentences

1.4 Hymn

1.5 Prayers

2. Ministry of the Word

2.1 Bible readings

2.2 Readings and poems

2.3 Address

3. Celebration of Life

3.1 Tribute

3.2 Reflections and contributions from family and friends

3.3 Special music

4. Response

4.1 Prayers of thanksgiving

4.2 Time of silent remembering

4.3 Hymn

5. Commendation and Committal

5.1 Gathering of family round the casket

5.2 (Silent) farewells

5.3 Words of commendation and/or committal

5.3.1 Commendation

5.3.2 Committal

5.3.3 Combined commendation / committal

5.4 Casket is lowered / curtained

6. Leavetaking

7. Blessing

A Funeral based on Dorothy McRae McMahan's Simple Funeral Liturgy.

Welcome and Notices.

Remembering -----.

Friends, we have come together because
we loved -----.

Her long life is greater than the length of
our memories.

She has been a point of constancy in our lives,
sister, mother, grandmother, great grandmother,
friend.

That life has now come to an end,

we come to mourn her death, to celebrate her life
and comfort those who mourn.

We come believing that all human life
has infinite worth,
That the truth, integrity and hopefulness
which resides in each life lives on.
We come believing that ----s life,
which we celebrate and mourn today,
is joined to the eternal continuum of human
endeavour stretching from the dawn of
humanity and on to the end of time.

----'s life was long, rich and generously lived.
None of what she gave us is lost
and our lives are more beautiful and complete
for all she has gifted to us.

Let us reflect upon words of comfort and hope
from the scriptures and from poetry.

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,
his mercies never come to an end.

Set your troubled hearts at rest.
Trust in God always; trust also in me.

Here is the deepest secret nobody knows,
(here is the root of the tree and the bud of the bud
and the sky of a tree called life; which grows

higher than the soul can hope or mind can hide)
and this is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart
I carry your heart. *E.E. Cummings.*

In hope, in faith, in the gratitude of memory,
let us remember ---- in a moment of silence.

Hymn.

Readings and Tributes.

Prayers of Intercession.

Let us pray for those who love and mourn ----.

May their present sorrow be transformed by
hope,

and may joy and gratitude mark their memory
of her.

We pray for all people known to us,
who are grieving and who are sick.

Especially those facing their final illness.

May they be conscious of your presence,
may we be their skilful and loving friends.

We pray for ourselves,

confronted by our mortality,

may we not despair but cherish the days left
to us as a gift.

To be filled with love and friendship,
sharing and justice making.

We ask these things in the name of Jesus,
who even the grave could not hold. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer.

Hymn.

Please remain standing for the Committal and Blessing.

Committal.

Let us commit ----'s remains to the elements
which are gentle to us at the time of our death.
Ashes to ashes, dust to dust
may she be part of the world's cycle of dying
and life.

----, go forward on your pilgrim journey.
In the name of God who created you,
in the name of Jesus, who you knew to be your Saviour,
in the name of the Sustaining Spirit.
Go forward in our love,
into the presence of love's completeness. **Amen.**

Blessing.

May God give us peace,
peace with ---- and our memories of her,
peace with each other,
peace with ourselves.
Go with God's blessing,
the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer
of the World. **Amen.**

Readings for Funerals.

The following two readings are from a Progressive Jewish *Siddur* (Prayer Book) and speak meaningfully about life and death to people of all faiths and of no faith.

Birth is a beginning and death a destination,
and life a journey
from childhood to maturity and youth to age;
from innocence to awareness
and ignorance to knowing;
from foolishness to discretion
and then, perhaps to wisdom;
from weakness to strength
or strength to weakness – and often back again.
From offense to forgiveness,
from loneliness to love,
from joy to gratitude,
from pain to compassion
and grief to understanding.
From fear to faith:
from defeat to defeat to defeat -
until looking backward or ahead,
we see that victory lies
not at some high place along the way,
but in having made the journey, stage by stage,
a sacred pilgrimage.
Birth is a beginning and death a destination.
And life is a journey – a sacred pilgrimage
to life everlasting.

We are like a breath; our days are as a passing shadow; we come and go like grass; which in the morning shoots up, renewed and in the evening fades and withers.

If some messenger were to come to us with the offer that death should be overthrown, but with the one inseparable condition that birth should also cease; if the existing generation were given the chance to live forever, but on a clear understanding that never again would there be a child, a youth, or first love, never again new persons with new hopes, new ideas, new achievements; ourselves for always and never any others – could the answer be in any doubt?

“The Hallowing of Memory.”

A Service for Burying Ashes Some Time after the Funeral.

Nb. With slight adaption this service can be used for unveiling and blessing a gravestone.

Gathering Thoughts.

When death came to -----

it came kindly, as a friend.

Yet for those of us she left behind

her death came as a wound, with loss, sadness and grief. This is right and good,

yet today we come here reconciled with her death, at peace with her memory and with one another.

When someone is buried in this place

the grave is like a raw wound

inflicted upon the earth.

Just as death comes as an injury

on those of us who are left behind.

Yet look around you,
the passing of time heals that wound,
the grave is reclaimed by the healing
and peaceful earth.

Our hearts are fragile things and take
longer to heal,
for as long as you shall live
you will feel the gravity of this place,
the pull of love and loss.
Yet life unfolds for each of us,
taking us to new places and endeavours.
For each of you ----'s memory
is a bright star, a shining light.
For that bright star we are glad,
we are here, and we remember her.

From the Scriptures.

The eternal God is your refuge,
and underneath are the everlasting arms.

If we have died with Christ, we believe
that we will also live with him. We know
that Christ, being raised from the dead,
will never die again.

The Lamb, who is at the heart of the
throne will be their shepherd and will
guide them to the springs of the
water of life; and God will wipe all tears
from their eyes.

Prayer.

God full of compassion,
In Jesus you made even the grave
a bed of hope for humanity.
In trust, love and hope we let go,
we entrust Freda's ashes to the earth,
and we commend her once more
to your steadfast love. **Amen.**

Burying the Ashes.

We have commended ---- to
God's everlasting love and care,
we now return to the earth
the ashes of her mortal body.
May she rest in peace and rise in glory.
Amen.

A Final Reflection.

The first truth is that nothing is lost in the
universe.
Matter turns into energy, energy turns
into matter.
A dead leaf turns into soil, a seed sprouts
and becomes a new plant.
Our solar systems disintegrate and
turn into cosmic rays.
We are born of our parents and our
children are born of us.

Closing Prayer.

May the gentle rain visit this place with
the greening of life,
may the winds of freedom move in
delight among the trees around it
and connect its breathing and growing
with the spirit of ----.
May the sun light it and warm it with love
every day, just as you loved her
and she loved you. **Amen.**

Blessing the Grave.

May this place be a holy place,
marked upon the landscape of your
hearts. May this be a place of peace
and connection. Of love and of memory.
Amen.

Blessing for us.

The blessing of God be with you,
the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of
the World. **Amen.**

A Simple Vigil the Night Before a Funeral.

Funerals can be very busy and family have much to do on the day, this is an opportunity to give them a time and space before the funeral to share their thoughts, feelings and memories. The vigil takes place in a familiar place to the deceased; say their living room. This was a vigil for a man in his 80s who died after a long illness. It could be adjusted according to circumstances.

Welcome, you might say what this time is for and begin by lighting a candle followed by these or other words;

Jesus said; “Come to me all you who are heavy burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden light.” (Mtthw 11:28-30.)

An Invitation to put symbols of the Deceased on the table.

Maybe a favourite mug, reading glasses, a photograph. What do these mean, what are the memories and stories associated with them? Afterwards an invitation is given to hold, touch or kiss these items and to put them down.

Prayer.

God, we thank you for -----,
for his love and care, his commitment, energy and faith.
We know that we face grief and loss, but know too that his journey has come to an end, and he is free of all suffering and pain.
We cherish his memory always, yet we let him go with our blessing.
Amen.

Memories and stories.

Poem or reading. *eg. “If I should go.”* By Joyce Grenfell.

If I should go before the rest of you,
break not a flower or 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.

Closing Canticle.

Lord, now let your servant depart in peace:
your word has been fulfilled.

My own eyes have seen the salvation:
which you have prepared in the sight of every people,
a light to reveal you to the nations:
and the glory of your people Israel.

Closing rite.

The candle is passed around and each person has the chance to say a final word, when the last person has spoken s/he blows out the candle.