

THE FUNERAL SERVICE

NOTES

- 1 The Christian recognition of death is a part of the Church's offering of the whole of life to God. The Funeral Service is a time:

(a) to worship God, celebrating the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that witness to the faithfulness of God in life and death;

(b) to give thanks for a specific person's life and mourn that person's death;

(c) to dispose reverently of the body.

The Funeral Service witnesses to the reality of death, and to the fact that death is a basic part of our common humanity that all must face. However, as each human life is of individual worth to God, the minister should make each funeral a unique occasion.

- 2 The following is a suggested order of worship and a collection of appropriate resources and is not a prescribed form to be used in its entirety. Some options are appropriate for general use; others for tragic or violent death; and others for the funeral of a child. The minister should exercise discernment in planning the style of the service and in selecting readings, prayers, phrases and words that are most suitable for the person whose life and death are being acknowledged.

- 3 There is a long Christian tradition of placing a coffin at right angles to the Lord's Table; it places the deceased within the congregation, facing the cross or Easter Candle. If the coffin is placed parallel to the Table, it suggests display, as when a body is placed for viewing. Ministers and funeral directors are encouraged to observe this practice, and church councils should give consideration to furniture re-arrangement that would make it possible.

- 4 Central symbols of the Christian Church such as the cross, the Bible, or a pall may be placed on the coffin at the start of the service. An Easter Candle may be placed on its stand near the coffin, and water sprinkled on the coffin, reminding us of the centrality of the risen Christ and of our baptism into his death and resurrection.

Church councils might give consideration to the making or purchase of a pall for use in their congregations. This is an opaque white cloth generous enough to cover a coffin and its stand entirely. It may be embroidered with a simple cross, and symbolises baptism. It is a reminder of the resurrection (the liturgical colour is the same as that for Easter) and of having 'put on Christ' (Galatians 3:27). A benefit of the pall is that comparisons cannot be made between more and less costly coffins.

A cross or Bible may be placed on the pall, which should not be covered by a flag, insignia or other memorabilia. Other culturally-determined symbols consistent with or illustrative of Christian faith may be appropriately placed on the pall, e.g. a simple floral arrangement, or a white mat, as in some Pacific cultures.

- 5 The Funeral Service is arranged in two parts. The first part, The Service in the Church, may be used in church, home or funeral parlour; this part is also used where the whole of the service is conducted in the crematorium chapel or cemetery, except that Prayer (14), is omitted.

The second part is The Service at the Cemetery or Crematorium. It may be helpful to those who come only to the second part of the service for the minister to give a brief introduction before beginning at Scripture Sentences (15). During The Committal, the coffin should be lowered to the bottom of the grave or catafalque, or else removed from sight by the drawing of a curtain or other such arrangement. This demonstrates the reality of the physical separation which death brings.

- 6 The recent tendency towards holding a single public service in the church or chapel without a committal service at a grave or crematorium should be resisted wherever possible. Where this does occur, it means that the committal occurs as part of the church service, and also that rites other than the Christian funeral are expected to be fitted within or around this single public event. The rites of civic, community and service groups have traditionally occurred only at the cemetery or crematorium; not all such rites are suitable for use within the church building. In this, the minister needs to discuss the possibilities with the relatives (see Note 7). Ultimately, the minister is responsible to the presbytery for the exercise of his or her ministry.

Wherever possible, any civic rite should follow the church funeral and be held at the graveside or crematorium.

Where there is a single funeral event, it is appropriate to hold the civic rite at an agreed location outside the church (e.g. at the hearse), where it can be observed with dignity. Where this is impracticable because of pastoral reasons, or due to inclement weather, the coffin may be moved to an agreed location, e.g. adjacent to the table for mementos (see Notes 15 and 16) or at the door of the church. The Committal (which traditionally occurs at the graveside or crematorium) may occur at the same location as the civic rite once that rite is completed.

- 7 It may happen that a request is made for a shorter Committal service, to be followed by a memorial or thanksgiving service. This reverses the normal logic of The Funeral Service, in which The Committal (16) occurs after the proclamation of the gospel and the giving of thanks for the deceased person's life. Ministers may choose to encourage those involved in planning the funeral to reflect on the order of The Funeral Service, in particular what needs to be said and done before The Committal takes place. Where at all possible, the coffin should be present in the church or chapel as a sign of the reality of death. A coffin holds before us that reality and does not hide it.
- 8 Should it be determined that The Committal occur first, that service could incorporate much of the first portion of The Funeral Service – beginning with Scripture Sentences (2), proceeding through the Service of the Word (which may include brief Words of Remembrance (5) and shall include the Preaching of the Word(8)) to the Commendation (11) and Committal. The memorial or thanksgiving service to follow may repeat many of these elements, and it may be that the Words of Remembrance and Preaching of the Word are expanded. It is appropriate for the memorial service to include a Commendation – but a Committal would not be appropriate. The memorial service would conclude with a Blessing (19).
- 9 The family should be encouraged to prepare for and plan the funeral in an attitude of simplicity. In particular, expensive caskets and extravagant floral displays may overshadow the hope in Christ to which The Funeral Service bears witness.
- 10 Members of the family or close friends may share in the service, particularly in the Bible readings, a tribute, and Prayers of the People (10).
- 11 The minister in placement should preside at the funeral. A minister, priest or pastor of another congregation or denomination who is pastorally involved with the family may be invited to participate.
- 12 In this order of service, NNN denotes the full name of the deceased person and N the Christian name only. In Prayers of the People, N may also denote the parents, the spouse or partner and family members of the deceased.
- 13 Provision is made in this order for the Preaching of the Word, following the reading of Bible passages. The purpose of The Funeral Service is not only to assist people to honour the life and death of a specific person but also to acknowledge God's gift of life and to witness to the faithfulness of God in both life and death. The preference, therefore, is for a brief sermon. Alternatively, the minister or a family member or friend may give a brief tribute, which may be placed prior to the Bible readings; a brief witness to the resurrection of Christ and the Christian

hope of all who believe in him shall then follow after the readings. Where there is inadequate time to give a brief sermon or a tribute/sermon, or where it seems inappropriate to do so, the minister shall, at the very least, give a brief personal witness to the faith of the Church in the risen Lord and his promises.

- 14 Physical movement or gesture and the use of symbols, music and silence may speak more powerfully than words. Ministers are encouraged to avoid an over-dependence on words. For example, it may be helpful for the minister to face or lay a hand on the coffin during the Commendation or The Committal.
- 15 In recent times, the custom has grown of bringing personal memorabilia of the deceased to the church or funeral chapel. The presence of the body itself is the most profound symbol of that person. Where such memorabilia are brought, they should be placed on a table set aside for the purpose, and preferably placed by the entrance to the church or where the mourners gather after the service. If they are displayed in the church, it is important that they do not obscure or detract from the primary Christian symbols of cross, Bible, baptismal font, the Lord's Table or the Easter Candle.
- 16 Occasionally, a request is made for the coffin to be covered with the particular symbol of a national flag, in order to honour a specific part of the life of the deceased. Where this request is granted, care must be taken that this neither conflicts with nor overshadows the primary Christian symbols.

Thought may be given to uses of the flag other than draping it on the coffin. These should be discussed with the bereaved family: e.g. the flag being placed amongst the mementos, or being held by an appropriate person during the ceremony and placed over the coffin for additional civic rites before The Committal. The chief concern is that the symbols of the Easter faith be seen as the context for this commemoration of a particular life.

17 The music used in the service should reflect the Christian message. Where requests are made for other music in the service, sensitivity needs to be shown while also ensuring that the Christian message is not compromised.

- 18 To assist participation in the service, especially by those less familiar with regular worship practice, words for the following may need to be printed in an Order of Service: hymns, creed or affirmation of faith, responses to readings and prayers. It may be helpful to place a note suggesting that mobile telephones be turned off for the duration of the service.
- 19 In addition to the Bible readings printed in full in the order, the following readings may also be suitable.

OLD TESTAMENT

Readings marked + will need to be found in a translation of the Apocrypha.

Job 19:1, 23-27b	I know that my Redeemer lives
Ecclesiastes 3:1-11	For everything there is a season
Lamentations 3:17-26, 31-33	The steadfast love of God never ceases
Isaiah 25:6-9	The Lord God will swallow up death for ever
+Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-5, 9	The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God
+Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) 44:1-15	Let us now sing the praises of the famous

PSALM

Psalm 27	The Lord is my light and my salvation
Psalm 42	My soul thirsts for the living God
Psalm 118:14-21, 28-29	The Lord has become my salvation
Psalm 130	Out of the depths have I called you, O Lord

NEW TESTAMENT

Acts 10:34-43	God raised Jesus from death
Romans 5:5-11	God shows his love for us
Romans 6:3-11	We believe that we shall also live with him
Romans 14:7-9	Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's
1 Corinthians 15:19-26	Christ the first fruits of the dead
1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-44, 50-58	How are the dead raised?
2 Corinthians 1:3-7	We are comforted by God
2 Corinthians 4:7-15	He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us
2 Corinthians 4:16 to 5:10	We have a building from God
Philippians 3:8-11, 20-21	That I may know him and the power of his resurrection
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18	The coming of the Lord
Revelation 7:9-17	God will wipe away every tear from their eyes
Revelation 21:1-7	Behold, I make all things new
Revelation 22:1-7	The Lord God will be their light

GOSPEL

Matthew 5:1-12	Blessed are those who mourn
Matthew 11:25-30	Come to me and rest
Luke 23:33, 39-43	Today you will be with me in paradise
John 5:19-24	The Son gives life to whom he will
John 11:17-27	I am the resurrection and the life

and these stories of the Resurrection:

Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-12; Luke 24:13-35 (especially 13-17a, 18-21, 24-27, 29b-35); John 20:1-18 (especially 1-2, 6-9, 11-18); John 20:19-23.

FOR THE FUNERAL OF A CHILD

Isaiah 11:6-9	A little child shall lead them
Psalms 103:8-18	As a father cares for his children
1 John 3:1-2	Beloved, we are God's children now

- 20 As a general guide to the essential parts of The Funeral Service, those sections are marked in the Outline and the Service with the symbol u, but the principles described in *'Ordered Liberty' in Worship* (on the Assembly website/CD-rom) should be consulted. Rubrics also give a guide; when the word 'shall' is used, that item is essential; if 'may' or a descriptive style is used, it is optional.

AN OUTLINE OF THE FUNERAL SERVICE

The Service in the Church

THE GATHERING

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Scripture sentences
- 3 ►Prayers
 - Invocation
 - Lament
 - Confession
 - Declaration of forgiveness
- 4 Hymn/song

THE SERVICE OF THE WORD

- 5 Words of Remembrance
- 6 ►The promises of God
 - Scripture readings
- 7 Hymn
- 8 ►Preaching of the Word
- 9 Creed
- 10 ►Prayers of the People
 - Praise for the work of Christ
 - Thanksgiving:
 - a. for life in the Church
 - b. for the deceased person's life
 - c. at the funeral of a child
 - Intercession:
 - a. for general use
 - b. in the case of tragic death
 - c. at the funeral of a child
 - d. after a suicide
 - e. after death by violence
 - f. after a difficult illness

[The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, if appropriate]

- 11 ►Commendation
 - a. for general use
 - b. at the funeral of a child
- 12 The Lord's Prayer
- 13 Hymn/song
- 14 Prayers

The Service at the Cemetery or Crematorium

- 15 ►Scripture sentences
 - a. for general use
 - b. at the funeral of a child
- 16 ►The Committal
 - a. at a graveside
 - b. at a crematorium
- 17 ►Affirmation of faith
- 18 ►Concluding prayers
- 19 ►Blessing

The Funeral Service

The Service in the Church

The Gathering

This is the service held in the church or in a funeral chapel, and normally precedes the service at the cemetery or crematorium.

The minister or a church member may open the Bible, pour water into the font, and light the Easter Candle if these actions are normally part of the local church's practice.

Family and friends may place mementos of the deceased on a table set aside for the purpose (see Note 15). The appropriateness of these should be discussed beforehand with the minister.

If central symbols of the Christian Church such as the cross, the Bible, water, a pall (see Note 4) or an Easter Candle are placed on or near the coffin at the start of the service, the following words may be said, or the action may take place in silence.

Placing of the Pall

A pall may be placed on the coffin as it is received at the entrance of the church; it is removed at the door of the church, before the coffin is carried out.

The minister or an elder may say:

As many of you who were baptised into Christ
have clothed yourselves with Christ.
There is no longer Jew or Greek,
there is no longer slave or free,
there is no longer male and female;
for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:27-28

The people may respond:

Amen.

The coffin is placed at right angles to the Lord's Table.

Lighting of the Easter Candle

The Easter Candle, placed near the coffin, may be lit. The minister or an elder may say:

Jesus said, 'I am the light of the world'.
The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness has not overcome it.

John 8:12; 1:5

The people may respond:

Amen.

Sprinkling with Water

The coffin may be sprinkled with water. The minister or an elder may say:

When the goodness and loving kindness
of God our Saviour appeared,
we were saved,
not because of any works of righteousness that we had done,
but according to God's mercy,
through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

Titus 3:4-5

The people may respond:

Amen.

Placing of the Cross

A cross may be placed on or near the coffin. The minister or an elder may say:

Christ crucified
is the power and the wisdom of God.
The foolishness of God
is wiser than human wisdom;
God's weakness
is stronger than human strength.

1 Corinthians 1:24-25

The people may respond:

Amen.

Placing of the Bible

A Bible may be placed on or near the coffin. The minister or an elder may say:

God is the source of our life in Christ Jesus,
who became for us wisdom from God,
and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

1 Corinthians 1:30

The people may respond:

Amen.

1 INTRODUCTION

In some contexts, such as among some Indigenous peoples of Australia, it is inappropriate to use the name of a deceased person.

The minister says:

We are here today
to give thanks to God for the life of NNN,
(or, to acknowledge the passing of NNN,)
and to affirm the Christian conviction
that while death is the end of mortal life,
it marks a new beginning in our relationship with God.
We are also here
to share the sorrow of those who mourn,
and to offer them our love and support.

Circumstances may suggest that the minister offer a few words about the particular circumstances of death, or acknowledge the profound feelings in the congregation. This should be done in the context of God's love and compassion.

The minister may give a Greeting, such as the following.

As we gather in community and hope,
I greet you in the name of God:

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit
be with you.

And also with you.

2 Corinthians 13:13

2 SCRIPTURE SENTENCES

The minister reads one or more verses of Scripture, such as the following.

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 11:25-26

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

1 Peter 1:3

[Jesus said] 'Come to me all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.'

Matthew 11:28

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.

Romans 8:38-39

At the funeral of a child

For thus says the Lord: 'As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you'.

Isaiah 66:12a, 13a

As a father has compassion for his children, so the Lord has compassion for those who fear him.

Psalms 103:13

3 ►PRAYERS

INVOCATION

The minister may offer a prayer such as the following.

Eternal God, our heavenly Father,
your love for us is everlasting.
You alone can turn the shadow of death
into the brightness of the morning light.
By the power of the Holy Spirit,
come to us in our darkness and distress
with the light and peace of your presence.
Speak to us now through your holy word,
that our faith may be strengthened
and our hope sustained;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

or

Strong, loving God,
Maker of all that is,
we come before you in our need.
On this day of parting
do not abandon N whom we love,
do not desert us in our grief.
Give us courage and strength for today
and hope and peace for tomorrow.
This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

LAMENT

A prayer such as the following may be offered.

Compassionate God,
death has taken N;
our faith in life is shaken;
our minds keep on asking – why?
Why does joy end in sorrow?
Why has our loving ended in tears?
O God, please help us to face our grief.

Give us grace in the face of the mystery of life.
Give us the wisdom that says:
‘Even if our questions were answered,
even if we did know why,
the pain would be no less,
the loneliness would remain,
and our hearts would still be aching’.

Give us comfort
that we may endure this night/shadow of anguish.
Give us new strength
that we may walk by faith/in trust
towards the promise of tomorrow.
Give us fresh courage
that we may turn back to life
with love and deeds that will bless the living.
O God, please help us, and transform our grief.
Amen.

Alternatively, verses from a psalm of lament may appropriately be used here, or as a reading: e.g. Psalms 13 (omitting verse 5), 42:1-9, 77, 102:1-8 and 130.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

The minister may offer a Prayer of Confession here, or as part of the Prayers of the People.

Creating and forgiving God,
we confess that we have not always lived
as your grateful children;
we have not loved as Christ loved us.
Father, forgive us
if there have been times when we failed N.

A brief pause may be observed.

Enable us by your grace
to forgive N anything that was hurtful to us.

A brief pause may be observed.

Have mercy on us and set us free from our sins
and grant us healing and wholeness;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

A declaration of forgiveness shall be announced.

The minister says a Scripture sentence such as:

God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself,
not counting our sins against us,
and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

2 Corinthians 5:19

Hear then Christ's word of grace to us:
Your sins are forgiven.

Mark 2:5

Thanks be to God.

4 HYMN/SONG

A hymn of praise or of faith in God may be sung.

The Service of the Word

5 WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE

One or two people may speak briefly of aspects of the deceased's life and contribution. Further tributes are best given on other occasions.

6 ►THE PROMISES OF GOD

A selection may be made from the list in Note 19; a New Testament reading shall be included.

A response such as the following may be used after the final reading:

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The following selected texts are printed for convenience of use, and are normally from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

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.

or

The Lord is my shepherd
I need nothing more.
You give me rest in green meadows,
setting me near calm waters,
where you revive my spirit.

You guide me along sure paths,
you are true to your name.
Though I should walk
in death's dark valley,
I fear no evil with you by my side,
your shepherd's staff to comfort me.

You spread a table before me
as my foes look on.
You soothe my head with oil;
my cup is more than full.

Goodness and love will tend me
every day of my life.
I will dwell in the house of the Lord
as long as I live.

Psalm 23

LORD, YOU HAVE BEEN OUR REFUGE

Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.
Before the mountains were brought forth,
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.
You turn us back to dust, and say, 'Turn back, you mortals'.
For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past,
or like a watch in the night.
You sweep them away; they are like a dream,
like grass that is renewed in the morning;
in the morning it flourishes and is renewed;
in the evening it fades and withers.
The days of our life are seventy years,
or perhaps eighty, if we are strong;
even then their span is only toil and trouble;
they are soon gone, and we fly away.
So teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart.
Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love,
so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.
Make us glad as many days as you have afflicted us,
and as many years as we have seen evil.
Let your work be manifest to your servants,
and your glorious power to their children.
Let the favour of the Lord our God be upon us,
and prosper for us the work of our hands –
O prosper the work of our hands!

Psalm 90:1-6, 10, 12, 14-17

I LIFT UP MY EYES TO THE HILLS

I lift up my eyes to the hills –
from where will my help come?
My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.
He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.
He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord is your keeper;
the Lord is your shade at your right hand.
The sun shall not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night.
The Lord will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.
The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in
from this time on and forevermore.

Psalm 121

LORD, YOU HAVE SEARCHED ME OUT

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.
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.

Psalm 139:1-14, 17-18

EVEN IN YOUR OLD AGE I AM GOD

Listen to me, O house of Jacob,
all the remnant of the house of Israel,
who have been borne by me from your birth,
carried from the womb;
even to your old age I am God,
even when you turn grey I will carry you.
I have made, and I will bear;
I will carry and will save.

Isaiah 46:3-4

A GARLAND INSTEAD OF ASHES

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me;
and has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the broken-hearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
to provide for those who mourn in Zion –
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the Lord,
to display God's glory.

Isaiah 61:1-3

NOTHING WILL BE ABLE TO SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF GOD

I consider that the sufferings of this present time
are not worth comparing
with the glory about to be revealed to us.
We know that all things work together for good
for those who love God,
who are called according to his purpose.
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?
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.

Romans 8:18, 28, 31b-35, 37-39

THE FATHER FROM WHOM EVERY FAMILY IS NAMED

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,
from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name.
I pray that, according to the riches of his glory,
he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being
with power through his Spirit,
and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith,
as you are being rooted and grounded in love.
I pray that you may have the power to comprehend,
with all the saints,
what is the breadth and length and height and depth,
and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge,
so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Ephesians 3:14-19

A LIVING HOPE THROUGH THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!
By his great mercy he has given us a new birth
into a living hope through the resurrection
of Jesus Christ from the dead,
and into an inheritance that is imperishable,
undefiled and unfading,
kept in heaven for you,
who are being protected by the power of God through faith
for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.
In this you rejoice,
even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials,
so that the genuineness of your faith –
being more precious than gold that,
though perishable, is tested by fire –
may be found to result in praise and glory and honour
when Jesus Christ is revealed.
Although you have not seen him,
you love him;
and even though you do not see him now,
you believe in him and rejoice with
an indescribable and glorious joy,
for you are receiving the outcome of your faith,
the salvation of your souls.

1 Peter 1:3-9

THE KINGDOM OF GOD BELONGS TO SUCH AS THESE

This may be suitable for the funeral of a child.

People were bringing little children to Jesus
in order that he might touch them;
and the disciples spoke sternly to them.
But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant
and said to them,
'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them;
for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.
Truly I tell you,
whoever does not receive the kingdom of God
as a little child will never enter it'.
And he took them up in his arms,
laid his hands on them,
and blessed them.

Mark 10:13-16

I WILL RAISE THEM UP ON THE LAST DAY

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 6:35-40

I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Jesus said,
'I am the good shepherd.
I know my own and my own know me,
just as the Father knows me
and I know the Father.
And I lay down my life for the sheep.
I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold.
I must bring them also,
and they will listen to my voice.
So there will be one flock, one shepherd.
My sheep hear my voice.
I know them, and they follow me.
I give them eternal life,
and they will never perish.
No one will snatch them out of my hand.
What my Father has given me is greater than all else,
and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand.
The Father and I are one'.

John 10:14-16, 27-30

IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE THERE ARE MANY DWELLING PLACES

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.
I will not leave you orphaned;
I am coming to you.
In a little while the world will no longer see me,
but you will see me;
because I live, you also will live.
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'.

John 14:1-6, 18-19, 27

7 HYMN/SONG

A hymn may be sung here, or some instrumental music played.

8 ►PREACHING OF THE WORD

See Note 13.

9 CREED OR AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

The Apostles' or Nicene Creed may be said (see pages 266-272), or an alternative statement of Christian faith.

10 PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

The minister and/or another appropriate person may lead these prayers.

The outline of The Funeral Service (on page 432) lists the various categories of the prayers that follow here.

Praise for the Work of Christ

A prayer giving thanks and praise for the work of Jesus Christ, such as one of the following, is offered.

All glory and honour, thanks and praise,
be to you, eternal God, our Father.
In your great love for the world
you gave your Son to be our Saviour;
to live our life, to know our joy and pain,
and to die our death.
We praise you for raising him from the dead,
and for receiving him at your right hand in glory.
With your Church in every generation,
we rejoice that he has conquered sin and death
and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.
For this assurance of our new life in Christ,
and for the great company of the faithful
whom you have received into your eternal joy,
all praise and thanks be given to you,
O God, forever and ever.

Amen.

or

Gracious God, we praise you
for all that you have done through Jesus Christ.
By giving him to live and die for us,
you showed us love without limit;
by raising him from the dead,
you brought us life without end.
For the assurance and hope of our faith,
and for those whom you have received
into your eternal joy,
we give you thanks and praise;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

or

Heavenly Father,
we thank you for all the gifts
of your providence and grace.
You have promised that
out of darkness light shall shine,
light that is the knowledge of your glory
in the face of Jesus Christ.
We thank you that his light
dawns upon us daily,
and brings us a grateful heart
and a will to love and serve you
to the end of our days.

We thank you for your gift to us of human love;
for the first love we know at our birth,
a mother's love and a father's care;
for the love of parents and children,
and the family circle.

Comfort us now with the assurance
of the life that is beyond this life,
and of a reunion with those
we have loved long since
and who wait for us in your heavenly presence;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Thanksgiving

a. for life in the Church

(For use when appropriate)

Gracious God,
we thank you that you received N by baptism
into the family of your Church on earth,
and granted him/her the gift of eternal life.
He/she ate the bread of life
and drank from the cup of salvation,
and gave himself/herself in love and service to Christ.

We thank you for...

*growth in faith...
spiritual gifts...
offices held and work done in the Church...*

b. for the deceased person's life

Heavenly Father,
we give thanks for the many ways
in which N shared his/her life with us and others.
In strength and in weakness, in achievement and failure,
in the brightness of joy and the darkness of despair,
we remember him/her as one of us.

We thank you for...

early life...
home and family...
relationships with family members and friends...
commitment to career/work...
service to the community...
leisure activities...
personal qualities...
courage in facing sickness and death...
those who cared for N...

The Thanksgiving may conclude with:

... For the assurance that nothing can separate us from your love,
and for the blessings we have received through N's life,
we give you thanks and praise forever and ever.

Amen.

c. at the funeral of a child

God of all grace and comfort,
we thank you for N
and for the place he/she gained
in all our hearts.
We thank you
for the love in which he/she was conceived
and for the care with which he/she was surrounded.
As we remember times of tears and laughter,
we thank you for the love we shared
because of him/her.

Any particular thanksgivings may be added here.

... For the assurance that nothing can separate us from your love,
and for the blessings we have received through N's life,
we give you thanks and praise forever and ever.

Amen.

Intercession

a. for general use

O God of death and life:
help us to grieve over N's dying
without falling into despair.
Give us hope in our confusion
and grace to let go into new life.
We pray for those who mourn for N
(especially...):

A brief pause may be observed.

We pray for those, in any place,
who face suffering and death,
and we grieve with them.

We pray for ourselves.

Situations of concern may be named, and a brief pause observed.

We ask you to receive these prayers
as offerings from the depths of our hearts,
made in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

b. in the case of tragic death

Merciful God,
we pray for all the members of N's family,
(remembering especially N and N and N,
whose sense of loss is so keen
because their love is so deep.
When we are unable to understand the things that happen,
when we are weighed down by grief and loneliness,
may we know that you are upholding us.
Give us the assurance of your constant care,
that we may have courage to meet the days ahead,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

c. at the funeral of a child

Merciful God,
we pray for all the members of N's family,
(remembering especially his/her parents N and N,
and his/her brother/s and sister/s N and N).
Your Son Jesus Christ took children
into his arms and blessed them.
When we are unable to understand the things that happen,
when we are weighed down by grief and loneliness,
may we know that you are upholding us.
Give us the assurance of your constant care,
that we may have courage to meet the days ahead,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

d. after a suicide

Loving God,
we thank you that N
is beyond the reach of darkness and despair,
but not beyond the touch of your care and love.
The ending of his earthly life seems senseless.
We cannot fathom the anguish of mind
N went through.

Give us grace to be content to release N to you,
in the assurance and hope
that you will show N the path of life
and lead N to walk in your presence
in the realm of eternal life.

Gracious God,
sustain and support those
whose love for N was dearest,
whose loss is greatest.
May they find beyond their tears
unclouded visions of your love,
and may they see beyond their darkness
the clear shining of your light.
Set their troubled hearts at rest,
banish all their fears,
and hold them in the comfort of your peace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

e. after death by violence

Loving God,
we thank you that N
has outsoared the shadow of our night,
with its cruelty, violence and pain.
When the trouble was near,
we could not understand
how you seemed to remain far away.
And yet it is to you we turn;
for in life and death
it is you alone whom we can trust,
and yours alone is the love that holds us fast.
We find it hard to forgive the deed
that has brought us so much grief.
But we know that, if life is soured by bitterness,
an unforgiving spirit brings no peace.
Lord, save us and help us.
Strengthen in us the faith and hope that N
is freed from the past with all its hurt,
and rests forever in the calm security
of your love.

Gracious God,
sustain and support those
whose love for N was dearest,
whose loss is greatest.
May they find beyond their tears
unclouded visions of your love,
and may they see beyond their darkness
the clear shining of your light.
Set their troubled hearts at rest,
banish all their fears,
and hold them in the comfort of your peace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

f. after a difficult illness

Loving God,
we thank you that N
no longer has to suffer pain or fear,
grappling with death, fighting for life;
and that for N,
limitations are ended,
weakness is overcome,
and death itself is conquered.

As N passes from our earthly sight,
we thank you for the years
of N's presence among us.
And while we feel the pain of the parting,
we rejoice in the faith
that N has gone to be with you,
for in your presence is the fullness of joy,
at your right hand are pleasures for evermore.

Bless those who had care of N,
especially doctors, nurses and technicians.
Guide and prosper
all who are engaged in medical research:
may they never lose heart
in their search to discover
the way of health and healing.
Grant that by their vision and courage
we may advance in our understanding
of the world
and be better able to help those in need.

Gracious God,
sustain and support those
whose love for N was dearest,
whose loss is greatest.
May they find beyond their tears
unclouded visions of your love,
and may they see beyond their darkness
the clear shining of your light.
Set their troubled hearts at rest,
banish all their fears,
and hold them in the comfort of your peace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

When it is appropriate to include The Lord's Supper, the Service of the Lord's Day order is followed from The Peace on page 162 (SLD-1) or page 209 (SLD-2).

11 ► COMMENDATION

The people stand.

The minister may move to stand by the coffin.

The minister says:

a. for general use

Holy God,
by your creative power you gave us life,
and in your redeeming love you have given us new life in Christ.
We commend N to your merciful care
in the faith of Christ our Lord,
who died and rose again to save us,
and who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.

Amen.

or

Lord, you renew the face of the earth;
receive N whom we have loved,
and grant to her/him those things
that eye has not seen,
nor ear heard,
nor the human heart imagined;
through Jesus Christ, our Saviour in life and death,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, forever and ever.

1 Corinthians 2:9

Amen.

b. at the funeral of a child

Holy God, loving Father,
your Son Jesus Christ loved and welcomed children,
and taught us that your kingdom
belongs to those with child-like trust in you:
We commend N to your care
in the faith of Christ our Lord,
who died and rose again to save us,
and who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit
in glory forever.

Matthew 19:14

Amen.

or

O Lord, you keep little children in this present world,
and hold them close to yourself in the life to come.
Receive in peace your child N,
(our daughter/son, sister/brother, grandchild, friend, etc.)
for you have said, 'Of such is the kingdom of heaven'.

Amen.

Matthew 19:14

Any of the above may be followed by:

12 THE LORD'S PRAYER

The minister should decide which version of the Lord's Prayer is likely to be known by heart in the congregation, and begin with the first full line said firmly.

It may, however, be appropriate to invite members of the congregation to say the Lord's Prayer in a language of their choice.

**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.**

**Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

or

**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.**

If not used after the Preaching of the Word, either the Apostles' or Nicene Creed may be said here by the minister and the congregation (see pages 266-268).

13 HYMN/SONG

A hymn may be sung, celebrating God's love for us, our love for God, the victory of Christ or the presence of the Holy Spirit with us.

14 PRAYER

The following prayer is omitted if the entire service takes place at a cemetery or crematorium. In that case, the Committal now follows.

May God in his infinite mercy bring the whole Church,
living and departed in Christ,
to a joyful resurrection
in the fulfilment of his eternal kingdom.
Amen.

or

Jesus said:
'Peace I leave with you;
my peace I give to you'.

[John 14:27](#)

Loving God, we long for peace:
peace to leave N with you,
peace to strengthen us for today and tomorrow,
peace with ourselves, with one another and with you.
Grant us that peace which the world cannot give;
through Jesus Christ, your Son.
Amen.

The Service at the Cemetery or the Crematorium

If the first part of the service has occurred in another place, it may be appropriate for the minister to welcome the people, and identify whose funeral it is.

At a cremation, the minister invites the people to stand.

It may be helpful to commence this service by reading a psalm or other portion of Scripture.

At the graveside or at a crematorium chapel, the minister gives the signal for the lowering, or the removal of the coffin from sight, to commence.

15 ► SCRIPTURE SENTENCES

One or more of these Scripture sentences may be read while the coffin is lowered to the bottom of the grave at a burial, or while the coffin is removed from sight at a cremation.

Alternatively, one or more Scripture sentences may be read first; then, a psalm or other reading while the coffin is being removed from sight.

a. for general use

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

Lamentations 3:22-23

For thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel:
in quietness and trust shall be your strength.

Isaiah 30:15

God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.

Psalms 46:1

I am sure 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.

Romans 8:38-39

What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the human heart conceived,
God has prepared for those who love him.

1 Corinthians 2:9

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the Father of all mercies and God of all consolation,
who consoles us in all our affliction.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

If anyone is in Christ there is a new creation;
everything old has passed away,
see, everything has become new!
All this is from God,
who reconciled us to himself through Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:17-18

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

Matthew 5:4

Jesus said:
'Come to me all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens,
and I will give you rest;
for I am gentle and humble in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls'.

Matthew 11:28-29

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

John 3:16

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 11:25-26

b. at the funeral of a child

The Lord God will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms,
and carry them in his bosom.

Isaiah 40:11

As a father has compassion for his children,
so the Lord has compassion for those who fear him.
For he knows how we were made;
he remembers that we are dust.

Psalms 103:13-14

Jesus said:
'Blessed are those who mourn,
for they shall be comforted'.

Matthew 5:4

16 ► THE COMMITTAL

If The Committal occurs inside the church, and a pall is used, the pall is removed prior to any civic rite that may occur. In the absence of a civic rite, it is removed prior to The Committal.

a. at a graveside

(or if at the church, where the remains are to be buried)

As the coffin reaches the bottom of the grave, the minister says:

We have entrusted N to the hands of God.
We now commit his/her body
to the ground,

Earth and dust are now cast on the coffin.

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 God be glory forever.

Amen.

or

We have entrusted N to the hands of God.
We now commit his/her body
to the ground,
earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust;

Earth and dust are now cast on the coffin.

trusting in the infinite mercy of God,
and to God be glory forever.

Amen.

b. at a crematorium

(or if at the church, where the remains are to be cremated)

As the coffin is lowered or removed, the minister says:

We have entrusted N to the hands of God.
We now commit his/her body
to the elements (or, to be cremated),
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 God be glory forever.

Amen.

or

We have entrusted N to the hands of God.
We now commit his/her body
to the elements (or to be cremated),
ashes to ashes, dust to dust;
trusting in the infinite mercy of God,
and to God be glory forever.

Amen.

17 ► AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

After a moment of silence, the minister says:

If we live, we live to the Lord,
and if we die, we die to the Lord;
so then, whether we live or whether we die,
we are the Lord's.
For to this end Christ died and lived again,
so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

Romans 14:8-9

or

They will hunger no more,
and thirst no more;
for the Lamb at the centre of the throne
will be their shepherd,
and he will guide them to springs of the water of life,
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

Revelation 7:16-17

or

The Lord Jesus says:
'Do not be afraid;
I am the first and the last, and the living one.
I was dead, and see, I am alive for ever and ever;
and I have the keys of Death and Death's domain'.

Revelation 1:17b-18

18 ► CONCLUDING PRAYERS

One or more of these prayers may be used, or the minister may offer free prayer.

Risen, reigning Christ,
in you past, present and future
are brought together in one great hope.
Renew our faith in you,
so that the past may not hinder us,
nor the present overwhelm us,
nor the future frighten us.
You have brought us this far;
continue to lead us
until our hope is fulfilled
and we join all God's people
in never-ending praise;
for your name's sake.
Amen.

Eternal Father, God of all consolation,
be our refuge and strength in sorrow.
As your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,
by dying for us conquered death,
and by rising again restored us to life,
enable us to go forward in faith to meet him,
that, when our life on earth has ended,
we may be united with all who love him
in your heavenly kingdom,
where every tear will be wiped away;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Almighty God,
Father of all mercies and giver of all comfort;
look graciously, we pray, on those who mourn,
that, casting all their care on you,
they may know the consolation of your love;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

O God,
whose mercies cannot be numbered;
let the Holy Spirit lead us
with the company of the whole Church
in holiness and righteousness;
in the confidence of a loving faith;
and in the strength of a sure hope.
May we live in favour with you, most gracious Lord,
and in perfect love for all;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

O Lord,
support us by your grace
through all the hours of life's day;
until the shadows lengthen,
the busy world is hushed,
the fever of life is over,
and the evening comes.
Then, Lord, in your mercy,
grant us a safe lodging,
a holy rest,
and peace at the last;
through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

19 ► BLESSING

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit,
be with you all.

Amen.

2 Corinthians 13:13

or

The peace of God which passes all understanding
keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God,
and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
And the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be upon you and remain with you always.

Amen.

Philippians 4:7

or

The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine upon you,
and be gracious to you;
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you,
and give you peace.
(And the blessing...)

Amen.

It should be noted that a Christian funeral involving cremation concludes with the interment of ashes, for which a service is provided on pages 483-488.