

When a loved one dies...

What about the funeral?

The practical arrangements for the funeral will, of course, be taken care of by the Funeral Director, who will work with the vicar to ensure that the service is all that you want it to be.

It may be that it's a while since you last attended a funeral, or perhaps there are younger members of your family who have never been to a funeral before. Either way it can help you to be more relaxed if you remind yourself of what a funeral is all about, and what will happen. This leaflet is designed to help.

Also, on the back page, you'll find some ideas for remembering your loved one in prayer.

What is a funeral for?

A funeral helps us say 'Goodbye'

Sometimes when a person dies there is no chance to say 'Good-bye' properly. Even if there was the opportunity for goodbyes, there is still the need for us to 'pay our last respects'.

For Christians, this also involves commending the person who has died into God's love and care. It's the formal way of 'handing the person back' into the arms of the God who created them.

The prayer in the service, known as the 'Commendation' prayer, goes like this (or similar words):

*God our creator and redeemer,
by your power Christ conquered death and entered into glory.
Confident of his victory
and claiming his promises,
we entrust [person's name]
to your mercy
in the name of Jesus our Lord,
who died and is alive
and reigns with you,
now and for ever. Amen.*

Often, when someone we love dies, it can be hard to accept that they really are gone. The formal farewell of the funeral can help us to face this reality. It also provides the opportunity for those who weren't with the person when they died, to say their goodbyes.

A funeral helps us deal respectfully with the body

Although Christians believe that after death we no longer need our earthly bodies, we also know that bodies are very important, because God made us physical beings, not just spirits.

The respect with which we treat the body of someone who has died is a sign of all that the person meant to us when alive. It also points us ahead to the physical reality of the new heaven and earth that God has promised.

A funeral reminds us of our own mortality

A funeral gives us the chance to remember that all of us face death one day - the day when we too will see God face to face. A funeral may give us a chance to prepare our own hearts. One of the prayers often used in the service goes like this:

*Grant us, Lord,
the wisdom and the strength
to use for the best
the time that is left to us
here on earth.*

What happens at the Funeral?

A crematorium service

After a welcome and opening prayer the service will normally include the following elements:

Readings from the Bible.

Some words about the **life of the person** who has died, as a way of sparking off your own special memories.

Prayers, including thanksgiving for the life of the person who has died, and prayers for those who mourn.

The **Commendation** prayer, when we commend the person into God's love and care.

The **Committal**, when we commit the person's body to be cremated.

A **final prayer**, in which we remember all those we love who have gone on ahead of us.

A final **blessing**.

At the end of the service the vicar will leave the chapel and the Funeral Director will guide you out when you are ready.

A service in church, followed by cremation

The basic elements are the same as for a crematorium service (above), with the possible addition of one or two hymns. The committal and final prayers may take place either in church, or in a separate, very brief, ceremony at the crematorium chapel.

A burial service

The main part of the service takes place in the church (or cemetery chapel) and includes all of the elements mentioned above for a crematorium service. After the Commendation prayer the congregation move to the graveside for the Committal, final prayers and blessing. The Minister and Funeral Director will always explain what is happening next.

After the Funeral

The offer of a visit

People naturally look to their family for support at times like this, but it can sometimes help to talk to someone else as well. If you would like the vicar to call round for a chat or to pray with you, then please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Opportunities for remembering

Once a year (usually on the evening of Remembrance Sunday) we hold a service of Commemoration of the Departed at St Bede's church. There is an open invitation to anyone who has been bereaved, no matter how long ago. However, we specially invite everyone who has been bereaved in the last year. You should receive an invitation to this service in the post. It is a simple service of prayers, readings and hymns, with a brief address and time for your own memories and prayers. We also read out the names of those we have been asked to remember. Your invitation will ask if you would like anyone's name to be included.

Remembering your loved one at home

Here are some ideas:

Find a time and place where you can be undisturbed for a while. Turn off the phone.

Light a candle as a sign of God's love and light with you.

Be still. As you breathe, imagine God's love filling you with every inward breath, and all your worries and fears leaving you with every outward breath.

Remember your loved one. Maybe a photo album, or particular possessions will help you to remember.

Offer those memories to God. Talk to God about your loved one. Tell God how much you miss them, what you appreciated most about them, the things you find hardest without them. Ask for God's help and peace.

Finish with a prayer, such as the Lord's Prayer, or this prayer:

*Loving God,
thank you for all those I love, but see no longer.
Especially I remember[name]
Help me to leave her/him in your care
and make me ready to share with her/him
and all your people
in the life of eternity. Amen.*

Church services

You are always welcome to our Sunday service: 9.30am at St Gabriel's Church, Weoley Castle (corner of Shenley Lane and Marston Road)

How to get in touch

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