

Marking our Communities 3

When we meet again: remembering and memorials

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3.1 During the pandemic and lockdown, many people were unable to plan and attend funerals, as they would have wanted to. Although each death will have been marked with care and compassion, with thanksgiving and hope, many feel that the story of a person's life has not been adequately told. Some may feel that they have been unable to say a proper goodbye, and need to draw strength and hope from being together with others impacted by a death.

3.2 When Government restrictions ease and we are able to meet together again for public worship, there will be a need to create opportunities for thanksgiving and remembering in different ways. The liturgical resources that follow have been assembled with the help of the Life Events Team to help ministers and others plan for these occasions. The resources should be used together with 'Prayers of Lament, Thanksgiving and Restoration', which are published separately.

3.3 A funeral is an occasion of huge significance. Life changes forever with the death of a loved one. As time goes on, the experience of grief continues. Those who plan additional bereavement liturgies will need to consider where each service fits in the journey of bereavement so that any later memorial service does not seek to repeat the funeral, but to help family and friends move on.

3.4 As the nation emerges from the lockdown, there will be many individuals and organisations who will wish to organise commemorative events. These may range from informal gatherings (remembering events) to more formal memorial services. At the forefront of such initiatives are likely to be Funeral Directors and (civil) Funeral Celebrants. It is vital, therefore, that clergy also take the initiative to discuss with Funeral Directors their local situation and collaborate in offering the bereaved the spiritual support they need, whether or not the funerals in question were conducted by Church of England ministers. Where possible, it would be good to arrange for such commemorative services to be live-streamed to allow as many as possible to take part, given that some people will be continuing to self-isolate.

3.5 The two main elements that memorial services and remembering events need to offer are opportunities to mourn and to give thanks:

- Acknowledgement of suffering, loss and death
- Gratitude for all who have helped in so many ways
- Thanks for survival, health and wellbeing
- Thanks for the life of the individual(s) who has died

3.6 Gatherings are likely to involve three groups of mourners:

- Those who have lost someone due to Covid-19
- Those who were bereaved during this time for another reason [the majority]
- Those who were bereaved anytime in the 12 months before lockdown began

The bereaved are unlikely to be just the 'immediate family', but may also include friends of the person who died, friends of the family, colleagues, neighbours and extended family. In other words, the same sorts of people who, in other circumstances, would normally have attended the funeral. Some mourners may find that the last few months have made them acutely aware of their own losses and mortality. It is important, therefore, in planning a service to ensure that it acknowledges the wide range of people impacted by loss who may be present and the different stages of the bereavement journey in which they may find themselves.

3.7 Any public service of remembering, particularly those arranged for and with the local community, is for anyone who needs it and not just those who have already had church involvement in the funeral. This may seem self-evident, but the sad fact is that if the minister does not get the tone and the invitation right, people easily self-exclude from church events at the local level.

3.8 It is too soon to know if there will be a groundswell to hold national or county services of commemoration and thanksgiving when finally we emerge from this pandemic. By their very nature and size, events in cathedrals tend to be formal in style and less personal in content. They are important in life of a diocese/county because they give dignity and worth to people, recognising that individual losses and contributions are valued and valid. Such services will often have an ecumenical and may have an inter-faith dimension as well. However, given that the Government is unlikely to sanction any mass gathering of whatever kind for some months, the holding of large national or diocesan events is some way off. The immediate accent is likely to be on family commemorations and the local community.

3.9 As the nation emerges from lockdown, the needs of bereaved individuals and families are likely to be paramount. Smaller gatherings of friends and family to tell the story of the person who died will surface. These may be met through:

- A Memorial or Thanksgiving Service
- An informal Remembering Service
- Remembrance in the context of the Burial of Ashes

The effectiveness of the liturgy to engage those present will almost certainly reflect, and rely on, the quality of pastoral work in supporting or preparing the bereaved family and friends before and following the funeral.

3.10 A Memorial or Thanksgiving Service does not necessarily have to be as formal as its title suggests. The title Thanksgiving or Celebration for the life of *N* has become an increasingly popular title for such occasions. Giving thanks is what the wider family, friends and community will want to do, especially if they have been unable to do that because of the restricted number attending the funeral. Thanksgiving is more than remembering, and positively Christian. Typically, a Memorial or Thanksgiving Service has a lot of input, perhaps with singing by a robed choir and musicians, surrounded by prayers and blessing. There will

be those in the local church or community for whom this kind of service is appropriate, but until restrictions on congregational singing are eased, this may not be possible.

3.11 The Outline Orders that follow are designed for use in church several weeks after the Funeral Service has taken place. Further resources can be found here:

www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/common-worship/death-and-dying/funeral#mm141

Other more interactive ideas can be found at www.churchsupporthub.org

3.12 A Remembering Service is a memorial service by another name. It is a kind of occasion already offered in many churches, but which may be new to some clergy. It is a much more informal gathering, facilitated and held together by the minister, but with lots of opportunity to share memories by others, to offer personal prayers, and to be comforted by God's blessing and a sense of God's presence expressed through the support of others. In such informal occasions, care should be taken that there is a clear president throughout, who introduces and concludes the service, and ensures that the number of speakers, musical items and non-biblical readings does not unbalance the service from its focus on the Word of God, prayer and thanksgiving.

3.13 Community commemorative events may take place in the parish church as a focus for the local community, but they may equally take place in schools, workplaces, sports clubs, hospitals or (very possibly) a local care home, in fact anywhere that has been at the heart of events. They are likely to involve ecumenical or inter-faith connections. Holding any sizeable gathering will be dependent on Government restrictions in place at the time. With the passing of the months, many clergy will instinctively focus on All Saints/All Souls tide in or around 1st/2nd November. November is very much in the public mind the season of remembrance, with many regular church and civic memorial services and events, some held later in the month in the lead-up to Advent and Christmas when loved ones are particularly missed.

3.14 In the UK over 80% of deaths are marked with cremation. Regardless of the pandemic, the increasing tendency to restrict funerals to private 'family only' occasions, is leading to greater emotional weight being placed on the interment of ashes than has been the case in the recent past. A richer service for the burial of ashes, as outlined below, may be an opportunity to bring families and friends together. It may be particularly appropriate for a family where the funeral was held during lockdown, but equally it could be used following a regular funeral service in church or at the crematorium, and then incorporated into a Memorial Service.

3.15 In any of these cases, it is important to emphasise that the funeral service, irrespective of its brevity or reduced number of attendees, was a full and sufficient commendation of the deceased to God. The emphasis of the expanded rite for the interment of ashes should continue to be on remembering, giving thanks, and acknowledging the different stages of the bereavement journey.

+ Robert Exon

Chair of the Liturgical Commission

Contents

- 1 Planning a Memorial, Thanksgiving or Remembering Service
- 2 Outline of Memorial Service from *Common Worship*
- 3 Sample Memorial or Thanksgiving Service with and without the burial of ashes
- 4 Burial of Ashes (extended rite)
- 5 Other resources

1 Planning a Memorial, Thanksgiving or Remembering Service with the option of including the Burial of Ashes

The planning of this service will be in conversation with the family. The shape and content of the service will need to abide by current Government guidance, including music, social distancing guidelines and the distribution of Orders of Service, literature and gifts, but the following could be considered:

- visuals and actions
 - at the front of church? eg flowers, the ashes container, photographs
 - Will there be procession in/out with/out the container if burial of ashes? Will the family walk in as at a funeral or be in their seats already?
 - If the service is to include the burial of ashes, who will carry and place the ashes container – in church and for interment?
- Speakers, musical items, slides?
- If the service is to include the burial of ashes, give thought to the balance of what happens in the church building and what happens at the place of burial
- Congregation Participation
 - Hymns, other songs and music (singing may not be permitted, check current guidelines, recorded music or solo singer maybe be appropriate)
 - Readings – from scripture and non-Biblical
 - Memory cards – with provision either to write or to colour in
 - Memory book or ‘graffiti’ board
 - Memory stones
 - Prayer tree
 - Memorial #hashtag
 - Can any of the ‘memory’ ideas be turned into a forward-looking act encouraging folk to recognise how knowing the person continues to influence who they are? eg “because of *N* I am / I will...”
 - give away at the end
- something for each individual to take away as a reminder of the deceased, eg flower seeds, spring bulbs to plant, favourite sweets
- some Christian literature, including information about services and pastoral contacts

2 Outline Order for a Memorial Service from *Common Worship*
with the option of incorporating the Burial of Ashes

The Gathering

- 1 The minister welcomes the people and introduces the service.
- 2 Sentences of Scripture may be used.
- 3 Authorized Prayers of Penitence may be used.
- 4 The Collect

Readings and Sermon

- 5 One or more readings from the Bible.
Psalms or hymns may follow the readings.
- 6 Other songs and readings may be used and a tribute or tributes made.
- 7 A sermon is preached, testimony may be given.
[An authorized Creed or Affirmation of Faith may be used]

Prayers

- 8 The prayers usually follow this sequence:
 - ¶ Thanksgiving for the life of the departed
 - ¶ Prayer for those who mourn
 - ¶ Prayer for readiness to live in the light of eternity
 - ¶ The Lord's Prayer

[If there is a burial of ashes, the move to the place of burial happens here]

Option A: Commendation and Dismissal without burial of ashes

- 9 The departed is commended to God with authorized words.
- 10 The service may end with a blessing.

Option B: Commendation and Committal with burial of ashes

- 9 Appropriate sentences of scripture may be used
- 10 The departed is commended to God with authorized words.
- 11 Psalms 23 or 91 or 121 may be used
- 12 The committal and the Lord's Prayer (if not said already)
- 13 Closing Prayers and Blessing

3 Sample Memorial or Thanksgiving Service for an individual with and without the burial of ashes

The Gathering

Sentences of Scripture may be used.

The minister welcomes the people and introduces the service with these or other suitable words

We look not to the things that are seen
but to the things that are unseen;
for the things that are seen are passing away
but the things that are unseen are eternal.
Today we come together
to remember before God *N*,
to give thanks for *his/her* life
and to comfort one another in our grief.

All Amen.

Opening Prayer

God our refuge and strength,
close at hand in our distress;
meet us in our sorrow and lift our eyes
to the peace and light of your constant care.
Help us so to hear your word of grace
that our fear will be dispelled by your love,
our loneliness eased by your presence
and our hope renewed by your promises
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

Readings and Sermon

A sequence of one or more readings from Scripture, together with other readings and songs, and a tribute or tributes follow.

A sermon is preached.

Prayers

These or other suitable prayers are said by the minister or others:

Merciful God, we are made in your image
and we reflect your truth and light.
We give thanks for *N*,
for the love *she/he* received from you
and showed among us.
and for the memories which we treasure today.

As we recollect *her/his* life and cherish *her/his* memory
so we bless you that in bearing your image
she/he brought light to our lives;
for we have seen your compassion in *her/his* friendship,
your goodness in *her/his* integrity,
and glimpses of your eternal love in *her/his* faithfulness.

Grant to each of us, beloved and bereft,
the grace to follow *her/his* good example
so that we with *her/his* may come to your everlasting kingdom;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

Merciful God,
whose wisdom is beyond our understanding,
surround the family of *N* with your love,
may they know your gentleness in their grief,
and so not be overwhelmed by their loss,
but have confidence in your goodness
and strength to meet the days to come.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

**All In darkness and in light,
in trouble and in joy,
help us, heavenly Father,
to trust your love,
to serve your purpose,
and to praise your name;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer is said.

[If there is a burial of ashes, the move to the place of burial may happen here]

Option A: Commendation and Dismissal without burial of ashes

The Commendation

Gracious God,
nothing in death or life,
in the world as it is or the world as it shall be,
nothing in all creation can separate us from your love.
We commend *N* into your loving care.
Enfold *her/him* in the arms of your mercy.
Bless *her/him* in *her/his* dying and in *her/his* rising again in you.
Bless those whose hearts are filled with sadness,
that they too may know the hope of resurrection;
for the sake of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

All Amen.

Psalm 121 may be said, followed by this psalm prayer

**All Faithful Lord, lift us up when we are down.
Watch over us and keep us safe.
Be with us in our going out and in our coming in,
now and for ever.
Amen.**

The Dismissal

The minister may conclude with this blessing

Christ the Good Shepherd
enfold you with love,
fill you with peace,
and lead you in hope,
to the end of your days;
and the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

All Amen.

Option B: Commendation and Committal with burial of ashes

At the place of burial the minister says

Though we are mortal, but dust and ashes,
God has prepared for those who love him a heavenly dwelling place.
As we prepare now to commit these remains to the earth,
so we entrust ourselves and all whom we love to God's care,
knowing that God is our eternal refuge,
and that he holds us in his everlasting arms.

In a few moments of quiet we remember *N* and we commend *her/him* to God.

Silence is kept

Gracious God,
nothing in death or life,
in the world as it is or the world as it shall be,
nothing in all creation can separate us from your love.
We commend *N* into your loving care.
Enfold *her/him* in the arms of your mercy.
Bless *her/him* in *her/his* rising again in you.
Bless those whose hearts are filled with sadness,
that they too may know the hope of resurrection;
for the sake of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

All Amen.

The Committal

We have entrusted *N* to God's mercy,
and we now commit *her/his* mortal remains to the ground:

God our Maker,
in loving care your hand created us,
just as a potter fashions clay you formed us in your image.
Through your Spirit you breathed into us the gift of life.
In the sharing of love
you enriched our knowledge of you and of one another.
We claim your love today,
as we return these ashes to the ground,
earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust,
in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life ...

All Amen.

Psalm 121 may be said, followed by this psalm prayer

**All Faithful Lord, lift us up when we are down.
Watch over us and keep us safe.
Be with us in our going out and in our coming in,
now and for ever.
Amen.**

The Dismissal

The minister may conclude with this blessing

Christ the Good Shepherd
enfold you with love,
fill you with peace,
and lead you in hope,
to the end of your days;
and the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

All Amen.

4 The Burial of Ashes (extended rite)

This service is based on Common Worship: Pastoral Services pp. 323-330. It may begin in the church or chapel, or be held entirely at the place of burial. If it is to be held partly in church, people move either before or after the prayers, as is appropriate.

The Gathering

The minister greets the people in these or other suitable words. Appropriate sentences of scripture may also be used.

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Though we are mortal, but dust and ashes,
God has prepared for those who love him a heavenly dwelling place.
At *her/his* funeral we commended *N* into the hands of our loving God.
As we prepare now to commit *her/his* remains to the earth,
so we entrust ourselves and all whom we love to God's care,
knowing that God is our eternal refuge,
and that he holds us in his everlasting arms.

The minister may say one of the following prayers or another suitable prayer

God our comforter,
you are our refuge and strength
a helper close at hand in times of trouble.
Help us so to hear your word
that our fears may be dispelled,
our loneliness eased,
and our hope in you reawakened.
May your Holy Spirit lift us above our sorrow,
into the light and peace of your constant love;
and this we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

(or)

Merciful Lord,
as we come from dust and return to dust,
show us the face of our Redeemer,
that in our frailty we may bless your name
and praise you all our days;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

Readings

One or more readings may be used from CW Pastoral Services pp.325-327.

Psalm 121 may also be said, followed by this psalm prayer

**All Faithful Lord, lift us up when we are down.
Watch over us and keep us safe.
Be with us in our going out and in our coming in,
now and for ever.
Amen.**

There is opportunity here for a family tribute if there was none at the funeral.

An address may be given.

Prayers

These and other prayers may follow

God our Father,
we thank you that you have made each of us
in your own image,
and given us gifts and talents with which to serve you.
We thank you for *N*,
the years we shared with *her/him*,
the good we saw in *her/him*,
the love we received from *her/him*.
Now give us strength and courage,
to leave *her/him* in your care,
confident in your promise of eternal life
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

In a few moments of quiet we remember *N* and commend *her/him* to God.

Gracious God,
nothing in death or life,
in the world as it is or the world as it shall be,
nothing in all creation can separate us from your love.
We commend *N* into your loving care.
Enfold *her/him* in the arms of your mercy.
Bless *her/him* in *her/his* rising again in you.
Bless those whose hearts are filled with sadness,
that they too may know the hope of resurrection;
for the sake of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

All Amen.

The Committal

We have entrusted *N* to God's mercy,
and we now commit *her/his* mortal remains to the ground.

God our Maker,
in loving care your hand created us,
as a potter fashions clay you formed us in your image.
Through your Spirit you breathed into us the gift of life.
In the sharing of love
you enriched our knowledge of you and of one another.
We claim your love today,
as we return these ashes to the ground,
earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust,
in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life.

The Lord's Prayer is said.

These or other prayers may follow

Heavenly Father,
we thank you for all those whom we love but see no longer.
As we remember *N* in this place
hold before us our beginning and our ending,
the dust from which we come
and the death to which we move,
with a firm hope in your eternal love and purposes for us,
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

Lord, you are the Light of the World, illuminate our understanding;
Lord, you are the Good Shepherd, enfold us in your love;
Lord you are the Way, the Truth and the Life, guides us along our earthly path;
Lord, you are the Bread of Life, fill us with your power;
Lord, you are the Resurrection and the Life, give us eternal life,
and receive us beyond the gate of death.

All Amen.

**All In darkness and in light,
in trouble and in joy,
help us, heavenly Father,
to trust your love,
to serve your purpose,
and to praise your name;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

The Dismissal

The minister may conclude with this or another suitable blessing

Christ the Good Shepherd
enfold you with love,
fill you with peace,
and lead you in hope,
to the end of your days;
and the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

All Amen.

May God keep you in all your days.
May Christ shield you in all your ways.
May the Spirit bring you healing and peace.
And may the blessing God the Holy Trinity
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
drive all darkness from you
and pour upon you blessing and light,
now and always.

All Amen.

5 Other Resources

Prayers in bereavement

Remember, Lord, all who cry to you
from death's dark gates;
do not forget those whom the world forgets,
but raise your faithful ones to Zion's gate,
with your all-conquering Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ,
when hope is veiled in grief,
hold us in your wounded hands
and make your face shine on us again,
for you are our Lord and God.

All Amen.

In the darkness of unknowing,
when your love seems absent,
draw near to us, O God,
in Christ forsaken,
in Christ risen,
our Redeemer and our Lord.

All Amen.

Lord of all,
our breath and being come from you,
yet our earthly end is dust;
bring us in your mercy through the grave and gate of death
to the feast of eternal life,
where you reign for evermore.

All Amen.

God of compassion, we pray for those who mourn today
and for those whose need of you is very great.
May they embrace your promise of eternal life
and, in their grief, receive your gifts of peace, hope, joy and faith;
through Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

Gracious God,
surround us today with your compassion.
Do not let grief overwhelm us,
nor anguish of heart turn us from you.
In our darkness
let the light of your love still shine within us
and in our pain and loss
let the peace of your presence continue to fill our lives;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

Father, you know our hearts and share our sorrows.
We are hurt by our parting from N whom we loved:
when we are angry at the loss we have sustained,
when we long for words of comfort,
yet find them hard to hear,
turn our grief to more patient faith,
our affliction to firmer hope
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

Suggested Songs/hymns

- Be still, my soul, the Lord is on your side (KAD von Schlegel)
- Be thou my vision (Byrne/Hull)
- Christ is the world's light, he and none other (FP Green)
- Come, light of the world, light up our lives (P Inwood)
- Father, Lord of all creation (S Cross)
- Fill thou my life, O Lord my God (HN Bonar)
- For the healing of the nations (F Kaan)
- Forth in the peace of Christ we go (J Quinn)
- From heaven you came (G Kendrick)
- Go peaceful, in gentleness (P Field)
- Guide me, O thou great Redeemer (W Williams)
- I heard the voice of Jesus say (HN Bonar)
- I will sing the wondrous story (FH Rowley)
- In heavenly love abiding (AL Waring)
- Into the darkness of this world (M Dawn)
- Jesus calls us here to meet him (J Bell/G Maule)
- Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us (J Edmeston)
- Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided (T Dudley-Smith)
- Lord, make us servants of your peace (J Quinn)
- Lord of all hopefulness (Placzek/Struther)
- Lord of lords and King eternal (JC Winslow)
- Meekness and majesty (G Kendrick)
- O God beyond all praising (M Perry)
- One more step along the world I go (S Carter)
- Safe in the shadow of the Lord (T Dudley-Smith)
- Spirit of truth and grace (ID Cunningham)
- Thanks be to God whose love has gathered us today (S Dean)
- Take my life (FR Havergal)
- Take this moment, sign and space (J Bell/G Maule)
- Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord (T Dudley-Smith)
- There's a wideness in God's mercy (FW Faber)
- Ye watchers and ye holy ones (JA Riley)
- We cannot measure how you heal (J Bell/G Maule)
- We shall go out with hope of resurrection (tune: Londonderry J Boyce-Tillman)
- Word of hope and Word of healing (B Farrell)