



The Astwell Benefice

St Mary Magdalene Helmdon with Stuchbury and St Lawrence Radstone and St James the Great Syresham with St John the Evangelist Whitfield, St Mary and St Peter Lois Weedon with Weston and Plumpton and St Mary the Virgin Wappenham



A Guide to The Funeral Service

*Those who are gone are no further away from us than
God is
And He is less than a breath away*

Funerals are not only a time to say goodbye to a loved one and to send them on the last stage of their journey to God, they are also a chance to mourn, to celebrate a life lived and to remember.

As Christians we believe that those who no longer walk with us on earth have a new life with God. The burdens they carried in life, both physical and mental, are lifted from them and they can rest in the peace of our Lord. Because of this, a funeral can be as much a time of warm recollection, as a time of sadness. Happy and even funny memories shared are just as important as saying goodbye.

This is a basic guide to the service and an explanation of what happens before, after and during both the funeral service and the committal service. It is meant to help you decide what sort of funeral you would like and what you would like to happen within it, please feel free to talk to me about anything you want or are worried about.

The Church of England has created liturgy especially for funerals, this will form the major part of the service, however it is flexible and allows you to add and personalize elements such as hymns and readings.

This service will be unique to you and your loved one and I am here to make sure that happens whether it takes place in church, at the crematorium or both.

Reverend Carole



Preparation for the funeral.

In the week before the funeral I will come and visit close family members who live in the parish and I am also more than happy to talk to those who live outside the area on the telephone, if they and you wish, we will discuss the order and type of service you want to have as well as the hymns or songs you would like played.

I am also there to get to see your loved one through your eyes and those of their family and friends.

Because you will have so much to do and your thoughts will be elsewhere it is worth keeping a notebook handy and writing down things as they come to you in the time before we meet.

If you get the chance, try to jot down some of the many stories you will hear about your loved ones when you ring friends and relatives to tell them the sad news or inform them of the funeral details. These stories and your own personal recollections and thoughts will help me to make sure that your loved one is remembered as they were in all the various stages of their life.

There may well be hymns or popular songs that were special to your loved one or remind you of them, again if a tune or words come into your head jot them down too.

The Crematorium have an extensive list of CD tracks and also normally provide an organist.

CDs can be played in church and if you would like an organist, choir or bell ringers, let the funeral directors or me know as soon as you can so we can make sure they are available. In some cases, with the bell ringers and the choir this may not be possible but the earlier you can let us know the more likely it is we can sort something out for you.

During my visit or telephone call we will discuss what readings would be suitable for the service. There is always a Bible reading and if you do not have a favourite or feel it is not suitable, I can suggest a number of good bible readings.

You may wish to have other readings as well, poems, prayers or verses from books. Some people like to write their own, others have family favourites and others still get really good readings from the internet.

I also have a number of readings that you could use as well.

If you are having a burial then the Funeral service takes place at the Church followed immediately by the burial.

If you are having a Cremation, you have several options:

*You may like to hold the whole service in the Chapel there.

*You may wish to hold a service in Church, then travel with the coffin to the Crematorium for a brief Committal, which takes around 6 minutes.

*You may wish to hold the service in Church and then ask me to accompany the coffin to the Crematorium while you stay with the other mourners.

*You may wish to hold a short Crematorium service first and then come back to the church for a Service of Thanksgiving.

At the first three the Coffin will be there throughout the whole service, the final option allows you to say Goodbye first and then celebrate the life of your loved one. Some find this option the easiest.



Before the service:

You are welcome to ask me to accompany you to the funeral home to say prayers for the departed in the days before the funeral if you wish.

On the day of the funeral shortly before the service is due to begin the funeral hearse will arrive at the Crematorium or at the Church and I will be there to greet it.

It may well have come from home or from the Funeral Parlour and if from your home, you may wish for me to come to the house to say prayers first.

If you and your family have decided to arrive with the hearse you will draw up behind it. If you have come separately you will probably be waiting for it. Many of the mourners will also be waiting outside. I will ask them to take their seats before the service starts.

If you have asked family members or friends to help carry the coffin, this is when they should be pointed out to the undertakers. Do not be insulted that the undertakers may well still assist with the carrying.

It is a very difficult thing to do and they only want to make sure everyone is safe.

You may wish for close family members to walk in behind the coffin. It is normally not suitable for all the mourners to follow the coffin in, but this can be done if you wish.

Seeing the coffin will be upsetting for many mourners and it is expected, therefore if you or any of your family wish to change your mind and sit rather than walk behind this is absolutely no problem.

On the next pages I have laid out a guide to the service itself.

The headings in bold type are the ones you will need for your Order of Service, the Funeral Directors will help you with this as will I:

If the funeral service takes place in Church then you may have as many readings and hymn as you wish, however as most Crematorium have limited time slots, it is best to choose one reading and one hymn if the funeral is taking place at the Crematorium.

If you would like more time then ask the funeral directors if you can have a “double slot”.



The Funeral Service

The Procession of the Coffin.

I will walk in front of the coffin and I will say some passages from the bible. Any music you wish to be played as the coffin enters will then play.

The coffin will then be placed in front of the congregation, in the church this will be in the chancel or nave and in the crematorium on the podium.

Once this has happened the family, if they have followed the coffin, may sit in the front rows, which will have been reserved for them.

The Welcome – Reverend Carole Peters.

I will greet everyone and introduce the service. (At this point I will mention any invitation to the mourners to a reception afterwards, I will also give information about any donation requests and I will ask you about this at my visit).

The Introduction to the Funeral Service

I will then say some of the traditional words that are used in the Church of England to begin the funeral service

Prayers are offered after this.

The Readings

You may have as many readings as you like, but at least one of the readings is always from the Bible. I have included a copy of the ones most appropriate, but you may have a favourite Bible reading of your own to use here.

Any poems or other secular readings that mean something to you or to your loved one can be read out here and we can discuss this when we meet.

Members of the family or friends are more than welcome to do the readings, I will be there should they breakdown *(this does happen sometimes and is nothing to be concerned about and should not stop someone from having a go if they wish too)*.

Often no-one wishes to read in which case I am more than happy to.

Tributes /Eulogy

After the readings, members of the family and friends may wish to give their own tributes. If not I am happy to include these in the short address I will then give.

Thanksgivings for the life of the departed and prayers for those who mourn.

The Lord's Prayer

We will all say the Lord's Prayer together and it is worth writing it out in full in your service sheet as people always think they know the words but often emotion can mean they forget.

The Commendation and Farewell

This consists of a time of silence and a prayer of entrusting and commending. It is at this point in the service that we commend your loved one to God, we place them in God's safe and loving hands and we say farewell.

I will at this point sprinkle the coffin with Holy Water as a blessing.

The Committal

Having given our loved ones into God's care, if you like we have asked God to take their soul to heaven with him, it is at this point that we commit their mortal remains.

In church we will follow the coffin out to the grave side and the coffin will be lowered into the ground while some words are said.

Afterwards you may wish to throw rose petals, flowers or soil into the grave.

In the Crematorium Chapel we remain seated and it is at this point that the curtains will be closed in front of the coffin.

Both acts help us to say a final farewell to the mortal remains, comforted in the knowledge that our loved one is now with God.

The sending out

This is the final act of the service when a blessing is given to all the mourners.

At both the graveside and Crematorium this marks the end of the service.

At the Crematorium you will be invited to leave by a side door and go outside to view the floral tributes.

At the graveside you may stay as long as you wish.

If you decide to hold a service of thanksgiving after the Crematorium service this can take place on the same day directly after, or later if you wish.



The Service of Thanksgiving

A service of thanksgiving normally takes place after a burial or cremation, in some cases on the same day directly after the funeral.

It is equally as common to wait and have a service of thanksgiving a few days or weeks later.

You may wish to have a period of time during the service where family and friends may light candles for the departed.

You may also wish to have a time where family and friends are able to share memories of the departed with everyone gathered there.

The order for this service is set out on the following pages

The Welcome Reverend Carole

I will welcome everyone

The Gathering

I now say a few verses from scripture

Hymn or Song or Music (optional)

At this point you may like to sing a favourite hymn or listen to a song or piece of music that holds memories

Opening Prayers

Readings

. At a service of thanksgiving it is always nice to have some secular readings or poems that have meaning to family and friends.

You may wish to have some different readings here or the same ones that you have had at the crematorium or at the church.

Again you may wish to chose people to read or if not I am more than happy to do it

A time for Tributes and Memories (optional)

If anyone wishes to give a short tribute then this is the place in the service to do this, I will invite those who wish to say something to come to the front of the crematorium at this point. We should talk when we meet about who is planning to give tributes and it is often helpful for me to have a copy of what they wish to say, so if they find themselves overwhelmed I can take over and finish for them).

You may also wish at this point to invite people up to share their memories. You can either ask people in advance or make it more spontaneous.

Address and Eulogy

It is traditional at this point for me to deliver a short address which includes a Eulogy to the deceased, if the thanksgiving follows on from a Cremation then I this will be different from the Funeral Eulogy.

Hymn or song or music (optional)

At this point you may like a second hymn, or song or music to be played

Prayers

The lighting of candles (optional)

The Lord's Prayer

(You may choose either the traditional version “Our Father which art...” or the more modern “Our Father in Heaven...”)

Hymn, song or music (optional)

A third hymn can be sung here if you wish or you may again have a piece of music or a song you would like people to have in their minds as they leave, often a lighter, even humorous tune works well here.

The Commendation

Although we will have had a commendation at the crematorium, we repeat it here

The Blessing and Dismissal

At this point I send everyone out and back into the world.

A collection plate is normally left again by the door and details of donations can again be mentioned at the start of the service as can any invitation to mourners to a reception afterwards



*These prayers may help you put into words
what you want to say to God at this time*

What I have lost, what has been taken by
death and what lives on.
I offer it all into your hands, God.

Remembering brings such joy and pain, pain
that sharing our joys and sorrows together is
no longer possible in the same way.

I've lost someone who understood me
in a way no one else was able to.
I feel cut off from someone who feels such a
part of us, as to be our very own self. So I
turn to you, Lord, who holds all knowing and
being in your hands; one who knows us as we
have been known.

Accept O Lord, what I have gone through
since they died;
Sorrow for our loss, searching among familiar
places for someone no longer physically
there, my restlessness which causes us to
want to be continually elsewhere and when
elsewhere to want to go home.
My tears, my guilt at what was done and not
done
Warm smiles at remembered gestures,

Our memory is ours, yet it belongs to no
single one of us
For only you can understand and hold the
Tapestry of our lives together. For you are as
present to them, as you are to us.
So I offer my journey and theirs into your
keeping
So that in Your acceptance, I can accept
where I am now.
And in all this I ask for the help for your son,
my Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

My contact details:

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*Please feel free to contact me at any time
before and after the funeral.*

*No question or query is too small and I am always
here if you just want to chat.*