



Bible Readings and Psalms for Use at Funeral and Memorial Services

Any suitable translation may be used.

New Testament Readings

John 6.35-40

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 11.17-27

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said to her, '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. Do you believe this?' She said to him, 'Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.'

John 14.1-6

Jesus said to his disciples: '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.'

Romans 8.31-end

What then are we to say about these things? 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? As it is written,

'For your sake we are being killed all day long;
we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.'

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.

1 Corinthians 15. 1-26, 35-38, 42-44a, 53-end

I should remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you - unless you have come to believe in vain.

For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace towards me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them - though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we proclaim and so you have come to believe.

Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ - whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have died in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

But someone will ask, 'How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?' Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body.

So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body.

For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled:

'Death has been swallowed up in victory.'
'Where, O death, is your victory?
Where, O death, is your sting?'

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For 'God has put all things in subjection under his feet.' But when it says, 'All things are put in subjection,' it is plain that this does not include the one who put all things in subjection under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who put all things in subjection under him, so that God may be all in all.

Otherwise, what will those people do who receive baptism on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf?

And why are we putting ourselves in danger every hour? I die every day! That is as certain, brothers and sisters, as my boasting of you - a boast that I make in Christ Jesus our Lord. If with merely human hopes I fought with wild animals at Ephesus, what would I have gained by it? If the dead are not raised,

'Let us eat and drink,
for tomorrow we die.'

Do not be deceived:

'Bad company ruins good morals.'

Come to a sober and right mind, and sin no more; for some people have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.

But someone will ask, 'How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?' Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. Not all flesh is alike, but there is one flesh for human beings, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. There are both heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one thing, and that of the earthly is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; indeed, star differs from star in glory.

So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, 'The first man, Adam, became a living being'; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual that is first, but the physical, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven.

What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled:

'Death has been swallowed up in victory.'
'Where, O death, is your victory?
Where, O death, is your sting?'

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.

1 Thessalonians 4.13-end

We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord for ever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Revelation 21.1-7

I, John, saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

'See, the home of God is among mortals.
He will dwell with them;
they will be his peoples,
and God himself will be with them;
he will wipe every tear from their eyes.
Death will be no more;
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
for the first things have passed away.'

And the one who was seated on the throne said, 'See, I am making all things new.' Also he said, 'Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.' Then he said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children.'

Further Readings

Old Testament and Apocrypha

Genesis 42.29-end *The sorrow you would cause me would kill me*
 2 Samuel 1.17,23-end *David's lament for Saul and Jonathan*
 2 Samuel 12.16-23 *David's son dies*
 Job 19.23-27 *I know that my Redeemer lives*
 Isaiah 53.1-10 *The suffering servant*
 Isaiah 61.1-3 *To comfort all who mourn*
 Lamentations 3.22-26,31-33 *The love of the Lord never ceases*
 Daniel 12.1-3[5-9] *Everyone whose name shall be found written in the book*
 Wisdom 2.22 - 3.5,9 *The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God*
 Wisdom 3.1-5,9 *The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God*
 Wisdom 4.8-11,13-15 *Age is not length of time*
 Ecclesiasticus 38.16-23 *Do not forget, there is no coming back*

Psalms

Psalm 6
Psalm 23
Psalm 25
Psalm 27

Psalm 32
Psalm 38.9-end
Psalm 42
Psalm 90

Psalm 116
Psalm 118.4-end
Psalm 121
Psalm 130
Psalm 139

New Testament

The passages printed on this page are included in this list.

Matthew 25.31-end *The final judgement*
Mark 10.13-16 *Let the little children come to me*
Mark 15.33-39; 16.1-6 *He has risen, he is not here*
Luke 12.35-40 *The coming of the Son of Man*
Luke 24.1-9[10-11] *The Resurrection*
John 5.[19-20]21-29 *Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life*
John 6.35-40[53-58] *All that the Father gives me will come to me*
John 11.17-27 *I am the resurrection and the life*
John 14.1-6 *In my Father's house are many rooms*
John 19.38-end *The burial of Christ*
John 20.1-11 *The Resurrection of Christ*
Romans 6.3-8[9-11] *All of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death*
Romans 8.18-25[26-30] *The future glory*
Romans 8.31-end *Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ*
Romans 14.7-12 *Christ the Lord of the living and the dead*
1 Corinthians 15.1-26,35-38,42-44a,53-end *The resurrection of the dead*
1 Corinthians 15.20-end *The resurrection of the dead*
2 Corinthians 4.7-15 *We carry in our mortal bodies the death of Jesus*
2 Corinthians 4.16 - 5.10 *The heavenly body*
Ephesians 3.14-19[20-21] *The power to understand Christ's love*
Philippians 3.10-end *God's purposes for us*
1 Thessalonians 4.13-18 *So we shall always be with the Lord*
2 Timothy 2.8-13 *If we have died with him, we shall also live with him*
1 Peter 1.3-9 *We have been born anew to a living hope*
1 John 3.1-3 *We shall be like him*
Revelation 7.9-end *The crowd worshipping in heaven*
Revelation 21.1-7 *Behold I make all things new*
Revelation 21.22-end; 22.3b-5 *The Lord God will be their light*

Other readings may be more suitable for a particular occasion, for instance, at the Funeral of a child:

Psalm 84.1-4
Song of Solomon 2.10-13
Isaiah 49.15-16
Jeremiah 1.4-8
Jeremiah 31.15-17
Matthew 18.1-5,10
John 10.27,28
1 Corinthians 13.1-end

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Canticles for Use at Funeral and Memorial Services

A Song of the Redeemer

Refrain:

All Proclaim the time of the Lord's favour,
and comfort all who grieve.

- 1 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, •
because he has anointed me.
- 2 He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, •
to announce release from darkness for the prisoners,
- 3 To proclaim the time of the Lord's favour, •
and to comfort all who grieve,
- 4 To give them oil of gladness instead of mourners' tears, •
a garment of splendour for the heavy heart.
- 5 They will be called trees of righteousness, •
planted by the Lord for his praise.
- 6 For God shall make his righteousness and praise •
blossom before all the nations.
- 7 Buildings long in ruins will be rebuilt •
and the desolate cities restored.
- 8 And you shall be called the Redeemed of the Lord, •
a city no longer forsaken.

Isaiah 61.1-3, 11b, 4; 62.12

Glory to the Father, and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.

The Song of Manasseh

Refrain:

All Full of compassion and mercy and love
is God, the Most High, the Almighty.

- 1 O Lord almighty and God of our forebears, •
you who made heaven and earth in all their glory:
- 2 All things tremble with awe at your presence, •
before your great and mighty power.
- 3 Immeasurable and unsearchable is your promise of mercy, •
for you are God, Most High.
- 4 You are full of compassion and very merciful, •
and you relent at human suffering.

- 5 O God, according to your great goodness, •
you have promised repentance and forgiveness to those who have sinned against you.
- 6 The sins I have committed against you •
are more in number than the sands of the sea.
- 7 I am not worthy to look up and see the heavens, •
because of my many sins and iniquities.
- 8 And now my heart bows before you, •
imploring your kindness upon me.
- 9 I have sinned, O God, I have sinned, •
and I acknowledge my transgressions.
- 10 Unworthy as I am, I know that you will save me, •
according to your great mercy.
- 11 For all the host of heaven sings your praise, •
and your glory is for ever and ever.

Manasseh 1a,2,4,6,7,9a,9c,11,12,14b,15b

Glory to the Father, and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.

A Song of the Righteous

Refrain:

All God has found the righteous worthy and their hope is of immortality.

- 1 The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God •
and no torment will ever touch them.
- 2 In the eyes of the foolish, they seem to have died; •
but they are at peace.
- 3 For though, in the sight of others, they were punished, •
their hope is of immortality.
- 4 Having been disciplined a little,
they will receive great good, •
because God tested them and found them worthy.
- 5 Like gold in the furnace, God tried them •
and, like a sacrificial burnt offering, accepted them.
- 6 In the time of their visitation, they will shine forth •
and will run like sparks through the stubble.
- 7 They will govern nations and rule over peoples •
and God will reign over them for ever and ever.

Wisdom 3.1, 2a,3b-8

Glory to the Father, and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.

Nunc dimittis (The Song of Simeon)

Refrain:

All Awake may we watch with Christ:
asleep may we rest in peace.

- 1 Now, Lord, you let your servant go in peace: •
your word has been fulfilled.
- 2 My own eyes have seen the salvation •
which you have prepared in the sight of every people;
- 3 A light to reveal you to the nations •
and the glory of your people Israel.

Luke 2.29-32

Glory to the Father, and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.

- 1 Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace :
according to thy word.
- 2 For mine eyes have seen :
thy salvation;
- 3 Which thou hast prepared :
before the face of all people;
- 4 To be a light to lighten the Gentiles :
and to be the glory of thy people Israel.

Luke 2.29-32

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son :
and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be :
world without end. Amen.

A Song of the Justified

Refrain:

All We are justified by faith,
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

- 1 God reckons as righteous those who believe, •
who believe in him who raised Jesus from the dead;
- 2 For Christ was handed over to death for our sins, •
and raised to life for our justification.
- 3 Since we are justified by faith, •
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 4 Through Christ we have gained access to the grace in which we stand, •
and rejoice in our hope of the glory of God.
- 5 We even exult in our sufferings, •
for suffering produces endurance,
- 6 And endurance brings hope, •
and our hope is not in vain,
- 7 Because God's love has been poured into our hearts, •
through the Holy Spirit, given to us.

- 8 God proves his love for us: •
while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.
- 9 Since we have been justified by his death, •
how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath.
- 10 Therefore, we exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, •
in whom we have now received our reconciliation.

Romans 4.24,25; 5.1-5,8,9,11

Glory to the Father, and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.

A Song of God's Children

Refrain:

**All The Spirit of the Father,
who raises Christ Jesus from the dead,
gives life to the people of God.**

- 1 The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus •
has set us free from the law of sin and death.
- 2 All who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God; •
for we have received the Spirit that enables us to cry, 'Abba, Father'.
- 3 The Spirit himself bears witness that we are children of God •
and if God's children, then heirs of God;
- 4 If heirs of God, then fellow-heirs with Christ; •
since we suffer with him now, that we may be glorified with him.
- 5 These sufferings that we now endure •
are not worth comparing to the glory that shall be revealed.
- 6 For the creation waits with eager longing •
for the revealing of the children of God.

Romans 8.2,14,15b-19

Glory to the Father, and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.

A Song of Faith

Refrain:

**All God raised Christ from the dead,
the Lamb without spot or stain.**

- 1 Blessed be the God and Father •
of our Lord Jesus Christ!
- 2 By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope •
through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
- 3 nto an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, •
kept in heaven for you,

- 4 Who are being protected by the power of God
through faith for a salvation •
ready to be revealed in the last time.
- 5 You were ransomed from the futile ways of your ancestors •
not with perishable things like silver or gold
- 6 But with the precious blood of Christ •
like that of a lamb without spot or stain.
- 7 Through him we have confidence in God,
who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, •
so that your faith and hope are set on God.

1 Peter 1.3-5,18,19,21

Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.

A Song of the Redeemed

Refrain:

All Salvation belongs to our God,
who will guide us to springs of living water.

- 1 Behold, a great multitude •
which no one could number,
- 2 From every nation,
from all tribes and peoples and tongues, •
standing before the throne and the Lamb.
- 3 They were clothed in white robes
and had palms in their hands, •
and they cried with a loud voice, saying,
- 4 'Salvation belongs to our God
who sits on the throne, •
and to the Lamb.'
- 5 These are they
who have come out of the great tribulation, •
they have washed their robes
and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;
- 6 Therefore they stand before the throne of God, •
whom they serve day and night within the temple.
- 7 And the One who sits upon the throne •
will shelter them with his presence.
- 8 They shall never again feel hunger or thirst, •
the sun shall not strike them,
nor any scorching heat.
- 9 For the Lamb at the heart of the throne •
will be their Shepherd,
- 10 He will guide them to springs of living water, •
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

Revelation 7.9,10,14b-17

To the One who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be blessing and honour and glory and might,
for ever and ever. Amen.

A Song of the Lamb

Refrain:

All Let us rejoice and exult
and give glory and homage to our God.

- 1 Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, •
whose judgements are true and just.
- 2 Praise our God, all you his servants, •
all who fear him, both small and great.
- 3 The Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns: •
let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory.
- 4 For the marriage of the Lamb has come •
and his bride has made herself ready.
- 5 Blessed are those who are invited •
to the wedding banquet of the Lamb.

Revelation 19.1b,2b,5b,6b,7,9b

To the One who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be blessing and honour and glory and might,
for ever and ever. Amen.

A Song of St Anselm

Refrain:

All Gather your little ones to you, O God,
as a hen gathers her brood to protect them.

- 1 Jesus, like a mother you gather your people to you; •
you are gentle with us as a mother with her children.
- 2 Often you weep over our sins and our pride, •
tenderly you draw us from hatred and judgement.
- 3 You comfort us in sorrow and bind up our wounds, •
in sickness you nurse us, and with pure milk you feed us.
- 4 Jesus, by your dying we are born to new life; •
by your anguish and labour we come forth in joy.
- 5 Despair turns to hope through your sweet goodness; •
through your gentleness we find comfort in fear.
- 6 Your warmth gives life to the dead, •
your touch makes sinners righteous.
- 7 Lord Jesus, in your mercy heal us; •
in your love and tenderness remake us.
- 8 In your compassion bring grace and forgiveness, •
for the beauty of heaven may your love prepare us.

from Anselm of Canterbury

Glory to the Father, and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.

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For most of us, as we go through the daily minutiae of our lives, [death](#) is an abstraction. So, when it happens around us, we are caught off-guard, unprepared. As a minister, you can't let that happen.

What would you do if a friend or loved one dies and you are asked to do the service? Would you turn down that honor, simply because you are fearful about having never done one and don't know what to say? You

are expected to know these things.

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THE FUNERAL

TAKING THE MYSTERY OUT OF FUNERALS

(An excerpt from [Weddings, Funerals and Rites](#))



Several years ago, I recognized this and began learning about [funeral](#) and [memorial services](#). I contacted funeral homes and discovered, among other things, that there is a definite need for ministers to perform non-denominational services. I decided I wanted to conduct [memorial services](#) as an addition to my wedding business, so I began creating a healing service for the occasion.

The hardest parts for me were combating the potential fear of how I would feel about being around a dead body and trying to figure out what I was going to say. Until the time of my first [memorial](#), I'd never even attended a service, let alone seen a dead body. I'd like to

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start by saying that a dead body looks a lot like a wax dummy. Not scary at all. It quickly becomes apparent that the spirit has departed and what remains is merely an empty vessel.

As for the words to say, I quickly discovered that there is very little material written about funerals and virtually nothing available for ministers who want to perform them. I did find one service from a traditional religion and one from another non-denominational religion. Neither was quite the truth I wanted to share, but it gave me a place to start.

I begin my services with an opening and a welcome. I thank people for coming and begin to talk about why we are there, to celebrate the life of someone they have loved. I invite people to say hello in spirit to the deceased, while I lead everyone in a prayer. I talk a bit about life and death and what we have learned from the deceased before I move into the eulogy. (I created a standard opening for the eulogy, then I fill it in with information and stories I gather from the bereaved before the service.) I move on to talk about the value of telling stories and remembrances about the deceased and invite people to say a few words. It is not unusual to have nobody speak at the service, but sometimes people will come up if it's left open to them.

At this point, there is some additional flexibility. I enjoy singing 'Amazing Grace' at funerals. Not everyone is comfortable with that, but there still can be room for a musical introduction. Just be sure the funeral director knows if a tape or CD needs to be played. A candle-lighting ceremony, some scripture, or some selected poems can be put next. The closing is a prayer and a benediction.

If the body is going to be interred (buried), then I go to the graveside (unless I'm already there) and say some words of scripture, the Lord's Prayer and the words for the interment (giving the body back to the ground, etc.). I don't necessarily do it in that order; it just depends on what feels right at the time. It's good to be prepared.

I have found that [memorial services](#) are a tremendous place to teach, learn and to heal. One important thing to remember when you are conducting the service is that it is important for you to rein in your own feelings. There will be a lot of people around you in pain and grief. It's not your job to match them. It is your job to distance yourself somewhat and be compassionate, yet strong, so that the bereaved can lean on you and feel free to express their own grief.

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During the Time of Grief

During times of grief, you, the minister, become central in bringing comfort and hope to the bereaved. [ULC ministers](#) are not likely to preside over funerals held in churches because the local pastor would be involved and certainly hold the service. The services explained here are for [funeral chapel](#) and [graveside ceremonies](#).

It's important during this time, to set people's minds at rest. They may be experiencing grief, uncertainty about the fate of their loved one after death, anger, fear, etc. It's up to you to recognize those emotions and do your best to put them at ease.

Many [ULC ministers](#) are called upon to perform the ceremony in the funeral chapel only. Some are called upon for a graveside ceremony only. Not all funerals are religious in nature and the minister should be prepared to offer a civil ceremony without references to God or any particular belief system. The family knows what their beliefs are and those of the deceased and those must be honored.

It is common in these days for the minister to include some biographical content into testimonials section or the eulogy, which reminds individuals that the departed on was a member of a family or group and was at the same time an individual. You can get this information when you make your call to the bereaved before the funeral service.

There is no absolute format to conduct a funeral. I am going to presume that the minister is not well acquainted with the family and has been asked to preside over the funeral service in a funeral chapel. There may also requests for [graveside interment](#), services (committal ceremonies). These are usually much shorter.

The Funeral Service:

If you have been asked to do a funeral service and are in need of some non-denominational healing words to share, please go the shopping cart and look under 'general ministry needs'. We offer there a complete selection of funeral ceremonies that can be emailed to you right away.

Some appropriate scripture and poetry selections are below:

The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth.

(Ps. 145: 14-16, 18)

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

(Matt. 11:28-30)

Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

I would suggest the saying the Lord's Prayer, which supremely fits all occasions, or the 23 Psalm, written below:

The Lord is my Shepherd:

I shall not want.

He makes me to lie down in green pastures;

He leads me beside the still waters.

He restores my soul;

He leads me in the paths of righteousness

For His name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will 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 runs over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall

follow me

All the days of my life;

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever.

(Ps 23)

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy lade, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, an you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

(Matthew 11: 28-30)

Or you may use a "prayer poem":

Oh, ask not thou, How shall I bear

The burden of tomorrow?

Sufficient for today, its care,

Its evil and its sorrow;

God impartest by the way

Strength sufficient for the day

-- Jane E. Saxby

To heaven I lift my waiting eyes;
There all my hopes are laid;
The Lord that build the earth and skies
Is my perpetual aid
--Isaac Watts

Prayers:

God, grant us the strength and courage to embrace our Faith so that we may see that all of life is in Your hands. Amen.

Lord, we entrust all our hours to You. In our waking moments and in our sleep, we rest in You. We also entrust our loved ones to You in these moments of ultimate sleep.
Amen.

Our Father, we need a source of strength and refuge. We need a resting place. For being this kind of help in time of trouble, we offer our thanks. Bless the memory of this dear woman, my mother, and grant us all the peace that comes from trusting in You.
Amen.

Oh God, I thank You for the light of Your Son and the way that light has shone through the love of mothers.
Amen.

God, give us the grace to consider the way our lives are being measured. May the life of my mother remind us never to ignore the quality of life at the expense of quantity. We ask our prayer in the name of our Perfect Example.
Amen.

Our Father, for the promise of eternal life we offer our praise and gratitude. How difficult our lives would be today if we had no hope. But we do have a hope. We are called forth from this moment by the life of our Lord, in whose name we pray.
Amen.

Hear our prayer, O God, as we lay before You the concerns of our heart. Our hearts feel pain in these moments. Hear our cries, especially those that are deep and silent. You know the sorrow that has befallen us and You are aware of the grief within us. We come to You for healing and strength. Amen.

Or consider a reading:

Even though one short step separates us from this thing called death, when it actually occurs, we discover that death is not what we thought. Death is not the destructive force we feared it to be. Instead, we will discover death to have been conquered already by our Lord who experienced it for Himself, and then came back to tell us that we should not fear death because He had made preparations for us. "Let not your heart be troubled."
(John 14:1)

"But I would not have you be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."
(1 Thess. 4:13-15 KJV)

REMEMBER that there is no one way to perform a funeral service. The important aspects are reverence for the moment, continuing the cultural tradition of how we lay to rest our deceased, the call upon God for comfort and peace in this time of sorrow and grief, the

reverence of God's promise of eternal life to those that believe.

The funeral ceremony is for the bereaved more than the deceased. The minister is the professional person entrusted by [God](#) to carry forth the rites of the departed into the arms of a loving God.

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*The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away;
blessed be the name of the Lord.*

Job 1:21b

Philosophy and Policy of Christian Funerals at Mount Hope Baptist Church

In our efforts to assist you in properly planning the eulogistic services for your loved one, our church staff has prepared this information for your perusal and consideration.

I. The Christian Funeral

The Christian funeral is a worship service in which God's people witness to their faith in the hope of the Gospel, the communion of saints, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting and in which also a comforting assurance of God's love and salvation in Christ is ministered, especially to the Christian bereaved.

II. Towards an Understanding of the Christian Funeral

A funeral service at Mount Hope Baptist Church is worship of the true and living God. The funeral is God's way of bringing comfort to the hearts of those who mourn as scripture is read and preached, prayer is offered, praises are sung, grief is expressed, remembrance is cherished; and it is an occasion in which we, by the grace of God, bless the name of the One who gives and takes away.

The presence of family and friends around at this time serves to support and strengthen those who sorrow. The funeral gives thanks for life and lifts meaningful memories of lost loved ones helping us learn vital lessons from it.

Thus, in the funeral service, we gather primarily to worship God and confess our faith in a living Savior. Though we mourn our loss and remember our loved one, our focus is fixed on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

III. Funeral Matters/Logistically Speaking

1. While many chose the chapel at a funeral home for the memorial service, others prefer the church building where faith is nourished, marriage vows are made, children are baptized, communion is received, and prayers are offered by the people of God.

2. The practice of "viewing the remains" is generally customary in the Baptist Church. However, it is totally a family decision. Accordingly, the church will abide by the family's wishes. In rare instances the family may wish to have the casket kept closed.

3. Because fraternal or civil rites are not part of the worship service, these organizations should pay tribute to the deceased at another hour and place.

4. Many people chose to have the memorial service before the burial; others have the burial before the service. Either approach is appropriate and the church makes no recommendation in this regard. Over the years Christians have generally shunned the practice of cremation.

5. When funerals are conducted at Mount Hope Baptist Church, staff ministers ordinarily conduct

the eulogistic services in their entirety. The Senior Minister has sole responsibility and discretion in carrying out church funeral services. Consequently, outside eulogists are not encouraged to perform family funerals at MHBC? However, specially designated family clergy are welcome to offer expressions of condolences on behalf of the bereaved.

Only those special request (regarding things pertaining to the service itself, whether music or guest minister) which meet the approval of the officiating minister are acceptable.

IV. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. How soon after death must the funeral occur?

Christian tradition urges that burial occur as soon as possible after death, generally within three to five days.

However, it is customary to avoid burial on the Lord's Day or on a religious holiday and time is often required for close family members to gather. Any day Monday through Saturday is deemed appropriate?

2. Is there a cost for the use of the church? *Only in cases where the member has become inactive or is a non-member will there be a cost to use the church for funeral purposes. In this instance a burial plot and sexton fee is also accessed. Please consult the Chairman of the Trustee Ministry for details.*

3. What is the best place for a funeral? *No one can answer that question for you. This suggestion is offered only to assist you in making a proper determination. Customarily, Christians prefer the church. The church is the sacred center for worship and the most familiar setting in which to contemplate God and sacred events such as communion and baptism.*

Through the ages the church has been the gathering place of the saints for the preached word, where the Songs of Zion and the prayers of believers are lifted to God. These sacred memories comfort those who mourn. The church is open for you at any time that you wish to plan your service Monday through Saturday. It is your church and a Christian burial will not be denied anyone.

4. Do you eulogize unbelievers? *No. Unbelievers are asked to make funeral arrangements with the funeral chapel.*

5. Does the pastor or his designee perform Graveside Services? *Yes. Graveside services are often for simplicity and convenience and are sometimes the expressed wish of the deceased. The following are some issues you may want to consider in making graveside plans. You make wish to consider the forecast for wind, rain, snow or harsh summer temperatures. The time must be brief as to prevent prolonged standing. The ministry of comfort may be lost to physical stress and inclement weather.*

6. Who should I call when a death occurs?

Family members should immediately contact the pastor for pastoral care and the scheduling of eulogistic services. The pastor can provide invaluable spiritual and emotional support in a time of bereavement as God's personal presence in the midst of loss.

7. What services does a funeral director provide?

A funeral director makes all of the arrangements required to transfer the deceased from the place of death to the funeral chapel and to the ultimate place of burial; obtains the death certificates; prepares the remains for burial; aids in the selection of caskets and burial garments; assists in the preparation of obituary notices; and coordinates and supervises the arrangements for funeral services and burial.

The funeral director will arrange for transfer of the deceased to the funeral chapel and the funeral director in collaboration with the church pastor's schedule will begin a preliminary discussion regarding the time and place of the funeral.

8. What should I do if the death occurred in a distant place?

Call the funeral director in the location where the funeral service and burial will take place. They can make arrangements to transport a body from any location in the world.

9. What information will I need to provide to the funeral director?

In order to complete the death certificate, the funeral director will need the names of the deceased's parents, including the maiden name of the deceased's mother, the deceased's date of birth, occupation, and social security number.

He will also need to know whether you own a burial plot and the name of your rabbi, if any. He will also guide you through a series of questions designed to determine your preferences with respect to funeral arrangements, including the rituals to be followed, the type of casket to be used, the wording of obituary notices, etc.

10. How much does a funeral cost?

Although prices vary, a traditional Christian funeral today is about \$4,500 and rising. This cost includes transferring the remains to the funeral chapel and to the place of burial; preparing the remains for burial, a plain pine casket and the service fees for arrangements and supervision.

Not included is the cost of a cemetery plot, cemetery charges for opening and closing the grave site, obituary notices, limousines for family members, certain clergy fees and other optional expenses, all of which can add substantially to the bottom line cost. For the best burial experience, shop prices. In the same locality burial expenses and services can vary and sometimes widely. In the event of a derogatory eulogistic experience, please see [Consumer Funeral Rights Under the Law](#)

11. Pre-Need Planning

Many have asked should I plan ahead. Planning ahead is a very wise idea. It is wise to set a budget prior to visiting the funeral establishment. It makes it possible to make the precise arrangements that the deceased desired and avoids making costly decisions in an emotionally charged atmosphere.

Don't be financially fleeced by unscrupulous opportunists who prey on the bereaved, resulting in unnecessary funeral expenditures for many unnecessary items.

In many states state law requires that any money paid in advance for pre-need services be held in trust in a separate interest-bearing insured bank account and provides that the payments and interest are fully refundable if you change your mind about the arrangements for any reason before the funds are expended on your behalf. It is ill-advised to eulogize the deceased in expensive jewelry and clothing. Costly items may be better served as an heirloom.

Before making pre-need arrangements request the funeral home's policy on such matters and get everything in writing.

V. Funeral Arrangement Do's and Don'ts

1. At no time should funerals be planned without first consulting the church. The schedule of the pastor and the church should be respectfully considered at all times in making eulogistic arrangements.

*Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.
John 14:1*

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Notes to the Funeral Service

1 Sentences

Sentences of Scripture may be used at the entry, after the Introduction, or at other suitable points.

2 Psalms and Readings

[Psalms and Readings](#) should normally be drawn from those set out. A psalm should normally be used. It may be in a metrical or hymn version, or be replaced by a scriptural song (for [Canticles, see here](#)). There must always be one reading from the Bible.

3 Hymns

Points are suggested for these, but they may be sung at any suitable point.

4 Tribute

Remembering and honouring the life of the person who has died, and the evidence of God's grace and work in them, should be done in the earlier part of the service, after the opening prayer, though if occasion demands it may be woven into the sermon or come immediately before the Commendation. It may be done in conjunction with the placing of symbols, and may be spoken by a family member or friend or by the minister using information provided by the family. It is preferable not to interrupt the flow of the Reading(s) and sermon with a tribute of this kind.

5 Sermon

The purpose of the sermon is to proclaim the gospel in the context of the death of this particular person.

6 Creed

An authorized Creed or an authorized Affirmation of Faith may be said after the sermon.

7 Receiving the coffin

The coffin may be received into the church at the beginning of the service, or earlier in the day, or on the day before the funeral.

- ¶ A candle may stand beside the coffin and may be carried in front of the coffin when it is brought into the church.
- ¶ The coffin may be sprinkled with water on entry. This may occur at the Commendation, or at the Committal.
- ¶ A pall may be placed over the coffin in church by family, friends or other members of the congregation.
- ¶ Before or at the start of the service or after the opening prayer and hymn, and with the minister's agreement, suitable symbols of the life and faith of the departed person may be placed on or near the coffin.
- ¶ At the sprinkling, the placing of the pall or symbols, [the words here](#) may be used.

8 The Committal

The Committal is used at the point at which it is needed, for example:

- ¶ at the burial of the body in a cemetery or churchyard,
- ¶ at the interment of ashes when this follows on the same day or the day following cremation, in which case the second ['preparation for burial' prayer](#) is used at the crematorium, or
- ¶ at a crematorium when the interment of ashes is not to follow immediately.

Forms of Commendation and Committal are provided, but when occasion demands, other authorized forms may be used.

When the body or the ashes are to be deposited in a vault, mausoleum or brick grave, these words may be used at the committal:

We have entrusted our *brother/sister* N to God's mercy,
and now we commit *his/her* body to its resting place.

9 The Funeral Service within Holy Communion

The Notes to the Order for the Celebration of Holy Communion, as well as the Notes to the Funeral Service, apply equally to this service. Texts are suggested at different points, but other suitable texts may be used. In the Liturgy of the Word, there should be a Gospel reading, preceded by either one or two other readings from the Bible.

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