

A funeral provided by the Church of England. What to expect.

First of all, thank you for picking up / downloading this leaflet.

It's written by the Church of England churches in the Medway region and helps you to think about what it means these days to ask someone from the church to take a funeral.

Anyone can ask for the church to get involved with a funeral. There is absolutely no need for you or the deceased to have been regularly to church.



Who will take the funeral?

Normally a minister from the Church of England church of the parish where the deceased lived, or where you live will take the service. Your funeral director will arrange who that person is, but do tell them if you have links to a particular minister already who you want to be asked to take the service.

By minister we mean the vicar of the church, or a “reader” (which is church speak for someone who is authorised to preach in church and also has been trained to take funerals), or the “curate” (vicar-in-training) at the church, or the vicar of a neighbouring parish. All of us are competent and helpful and want to put together a service which is appropriate for those who will be there.

What can I expect to happen before the service?

Once it is agreed who will take the service, then normally that person will call you to arrange to visit and listen to you and any other family members and friends who want to input to the discussions. He or she will work with you to find out what is appropriate for you in terms of what is to happen in the service and what to say about the deceased.

Other options

If you opt for a burial and / or a service in church first then, again, we will work with you to bring together a suitable service order. The normal order of service on the next page will be slightly different since the committal of the body will happen in a different location to the rest of the service.

What will happen in the service?

What happens will be as a result of a discussion that you will have with whoever is taking the service. The normal order of service at the crematorium, which is often the starting point for this discussion, is:-

- Music on the way in to listen to or by the organist.
- Opening words of welcome, appropriate verses from the bible, a short prayer.
- A hymn – or space to listen to more music
- A reading – usually from the Bible, often John 14:1-6
- A time to reflect on the life of the deceased – usually led by the person taking the service, but always after a discussion with you; sometimes with poems or memories from friends and/or family.
- A short time exploring the meaning of the Bible reading.
- Prayers – thanking God for the life of the deceased, asking for peace for those who mourn, and for everyone there – usually starts or ends with the Lord’s prayer (Our Father...)
- Another hymn or space to listen to more music
- Commendation of the deceased’s soul to God, and committal of the body to be cremated. Normally the curtains shut at this point.
- Final prayer of blessing.
- Music to listen to on the way out to see the flowers.

Remember what actually happens in your service will be agreed together with the vicar. It’s possible instead to start with a blank sheet and build in what is appropriate for you and your family.

What should I expect after the service?

If you want to invite the minister to the wake then you are welcome to.

Many churches have bereavement visitors who will drop by a few weeks later and offer to listen if you want that. Most also have an annual service of remembrance (around about the end of October) when families and friends are invited to give thanks again for the life of people who have died. There are also a number of bereavement friendship groups in Medway which we will give you information about.

A number of churches have mid week groups which meet for lunch or afternoon tea and mutual support – no doubt there'll be an invitation to one of those if that's appropriate... and of course there is always a big welcome at regular Sunday services, and special services such as Christmas, Easter or harvest.

It is absolutely your choice to accept or refuse any of the options for ongoing support.

What else should I know?

Traditionally Christians believe that God loves everyone regardless of character and history and that anyone who chooses to acknowledge that love whilst they are alive will go to heaven. We don't know what happens inside a person's head even in the last moments of life, so Church of England funerals happen on the basis that anyone whatever their history, might have accepted that love and forgiveness of God and so could be in heaven with God.

We hope this leaflet has been helpful in thinking about a funeral service taken by the Church of England. We look forward to meeting you soon.