

REMEMBERING AT THE TIME OF A FUNERAL

This short service (compiled from a variety of sources)¹ is here to help you say a formal goodbye to a loved one or friend when you are unable to attend the actual funeral. Everything here is a suggestion and nothing is compulsory: do only what feels right and helpful to you. Some of what is here is very similar to what is said at a Christian funeral; other parts are different, to reflect different location and context. Where you see the symbol N, you are invited to say the name of the person you are commemorating. There are some music and reading suggestions, with hyperlinks to online sources where possible, but feel free to use what is appropriate.

Becoming Present

*You may wish to gather one or more items which remind you of N,
e.g. photo, book, piece of jewellery.*

Find a comfortable space. Light a candle. Take a moment to sit quietly.

You might like to listen to a piece of Music (e.g. [Gabriel's Oboe by Ennio Morricone](#))

Take a deep breath in, then breathe out fully and completely.

Read these words:

St Paul writes: "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.

[\(Romans 8:38-39\)](#)

Jesus says: "Remember, I am with you always, to the end of time." ([Matthew 28:20](#))

If you wish, read this prayer aloud

Living, loving God,

Please me with me at this time.

My heart is aching with pain and sadness at the death of N;
and I so wanted to be able to accompany N on their final journey
to say goodbye to them in person.

In this time of physical separation, help me not to feel alone,

help me to know that you are with me,

and with each of us who knew and loved N,

for I hold to the promise that the ties of friendship and love which knit us together in life
do not unravel with death.

I am so thankful that I knew N and that they touched my life,

and acknowledge the difficult times we faced, too;

I offer all these thoughts and emotions to you,

asking that you would hold them tenderly, with love and compassion,

helping me to celebrated N's life

and begin to heal any wounds of pain, hurt and regret.

Eternal God,

be with all who mourn this day,

that we might find comfort in our distress, light in our darkness and faith in our doubt,

knowing that nothing is ever separated from you or your love,

through the Lord Jesus Christ, AMEN.

Time with God's Word

The Bible has a lot to say about the meaning of life and how we live it in God's presence. We turn to scripture, as generations before us have done, to draw comfort and strength from its words of wisdom and hope. Here are two of the most common funeral readings; some other suggestions are at the end of the service. Feel free to read out loud or silently.

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I 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 overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

[\(Psalm 23\)](#)

'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many mansions. 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. ... Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

[\(John 14\)](#)

A Chance to Reflect and Give Thanks

Think about the readings: which words particularly speak to you?

What do you need to hear from God today?

Now take a few moments to think about the person who has died. If you are sharing this time with someone else, tell each other about your memories.

What was special about them?

What was the best thing you did together?

When you think of N is there a song or a special place or time that comes to mind?

What did you learn about life, or yourself, from N?

What would you like to say to N if they were here now?

What particularly would you like to thank God for about their life?

You might like to listen to N's favourite piece of music, hymn or worship song.

Or you could listen to [Gymnopedie No.1 by Satie](#)

A prayer, to be read aloud or silently

Eternal Lord God,

You the beginning and end of all things, the author and giver of life;
we give you grateful thanks for all we have in our lives,
all there is to cherish and all whom we have to love.

Whilst we grieve their passing,
we particularly give you thanks for your loving and beloved N:
all that made them unique in this world
and all the special memories we have of them,
which we hold here and now in your presence...
Now that they have gone from our sight
give us the strength to release N into your care
knowing you welcome her as a long-lost friend
as precious to you as he/she is to us...
Rest eternal grant unto him/her, O Lord,
and let light perpetual shine upon him/her,
now and always, AMEN.

Commending into God's care

If you are able, read aloud:

N, you are loved and missed,
but you will forever be in my heart.
Travel well from this world,
for you go to meet the God who created you in love,
the God who came to this world to show you the way home,
and the God who unites us still in faith, hope and love.
Goodbye, God bless, safe journey home.

You might like to listen to [In Paradisum from Fauré's Requiem](#)

Looking to the future

A prayer, to be read aloud or silently

God of all time and space,
In saying goodbye to N,
I realise the future looks different from what I had hoped:
my journey through life now looks different without N's presence.
I ask your continued gentle presence in my life, and the lives of all knew N,
as we step out, cautiously, into the unknown.
At this time, I want to particularly remember:
you may wish to list some names at this point.

May your peace enfold each one of us;
Give each person who mourns the strength to live in the light of your love,
which unites us with all our loved ones, in heaven and on earth.
I pray that you will, in time, deliver our eyes from tears,
our feet from falling and our souls from despair,

as we trust in your unending mercy and loving care,
and your promise that death is not just an ending but that,
through Christ, we can all look towards a time
when we are reunited with our loved ones in your eternal care.

I bring all my prayers,
spoken aloud or held silently in my heart,
before you, God, summing them up in the words offered by Jesus himself:
Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven;
give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:
for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever, AMEN.

A blessing, to be read aloud or silently

May God give to all comfort and peace, light and joy, in this world and the next;
and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all, now and for evermore, AMEN.

Extinguish the candle.

*Spend as long or as short a time as you wish in quiet stillness or listening to music.
Perhaps raise a glass to N at dinner this evening and share stories of them with your family.
When you feel able, get in touch with someone else who knew and loved N, and share
stories with them.*

Further suggestions for music:

[Amazing Grace](#)

[Abide with me](#)

[Guide me, O thou great Redeemer](#)

[Hallelujah, Leonard Cohen](#)

[If ye love me, Thomas Tallis](#)

[Pie Jesu, Andrew Lloyd Webber](#)

[The Lark Ascending](#)

[The Lord bless you and keep you,](#)

[John Rutter](#)

[The peace of the earth be with you](#)

Further suggestions for scripture readings:

[Psalm 121](#)

[Ecclesiastes 3:1-13](#)

[John 6:35-40](#)

[1 Corinthians 15:51-57](#)

ⁱ <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/16626/i-cant-get-to-a-funeral.pdf>,
<https://cathedral.southwark.anglican.org/about/news/a-liturgy-for-those-unable-to-attend-a-funeral/>,
<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/04/No-Funeral-A5.pdf>, Lezley J Stuart, *Celebrating Life in Death*
(2016), and original material by the Reverend Fiona J Reynolds.